ISRAEL'S 9/11

October 7 & the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy of the End Times

Tom Miyen

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I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth:
Blood and fire and columns of smoke.
The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.

Joel 3:3-4 / 2:30-31

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"This Is Our 9/11"

"This is our 9/11. We are committed to change the equation, to shatter the old paradigm." These were the words of Gilad Erdan, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, only hours after the October 7 attack.[1] It was echoed by the spokesperson for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), Major Nir Dinar: "This is our 9/11. They got us."[2] *The Wall Street Journal* proclaimed "Israel Faces Its 9/11,"[3] and several other media outlets ran similar headlines. Even US President Joe Biden, in his Tel Aviv speech on 18 October 2023, remarked: "We've seen it described as Israel's 9/11. But for a nation the size of Israel, it was like 15 9/11s."[4]

And indeed, many striking similarities exist between al-Qaeda's September 11, 2001 attack and the Hamas-led operation of October 7, 2023. The parallels lie not only in the acts themselves—truly horrific and unimaginable at the time—but also in what preceded them and what followed.

Of course, significant differences exist as well, most notably the religious context in the latter case. But all this is interconnected and part of a much larger, complex picture: self-made terrorists, wars in the Middle East, Greater Israel, the "Red Heifer," and the coming of the Messiah.

Both events served as catalysts—opportunities for US and Israeli radicals within their respective governments to advance long-standing goals that catastrophically reshaped, and continue to shape, the world. Neoconservatives and Zionists, who emerged politically strengthened in the wake of the attacks, share similar ambitions: rearranging the world to their liking, where the US and Israel dominate the "New Middle East" and beyond. Their alliance dates back decades.

From their Trotskyite and leftist origins in the 1930s, the neocons underwent a major transformation in the 1970s, aligning with Zionists after the 1967 Six-Day War; the partnership was solidified following 9/11, and today it remains as strong as ever.

The history of the Jewish Zionist movement also contains many interesting twists—from alliance with Mussolini to assassinations and bombings. Traditionally, Zionism was secular and divided between right and left, but a new current emerged: the religious Jewish Zionists. According to traditional views in Judaism, these people fundamentally distort their religion. Yet they continue to grow in number and political influence—indeed, they are now part of the governing coalition in Israel.

Another motif in this elaborate picture is the role of white Christians. Zionism originated as a Christian idea in the late 19th century, and today Israel's most fervent supporters are the American and European Christian right. Despite their fundamentally different beliefs about how disastrously the story ends for the other side, Christian Zionists and religious Jewish Zionists work hand in hand; both believe we are living in the biblical End Times, and both feel duty-bound to accelerate the prophesied events.

In their beliefs, a red heifer is required for this purpose, to be sacrificed in order to begin rebuilding the Third Temple in Jerusalem—on the site where Islam's holy Al-Aqsa Mosque stands today. If that triggers further conflicts, so be it; in their view, it is all part of a final great war foretold in prophecy. The sooner it comes, the better, they believe; the Messiah will return, evil will be defeated, and humanity will enter God's reign. But if it all fails, there is always the option of bringing the whole world down—just as Samson brought down the Philistine temple on his enemies and himself.

Armageddon is not inevitable; whether the world chooses a path to avoid it is the question.

Let us begin with the events of October 7, 2023—what we know truly happened, and the claims that later proved to be malicious fabrications.

What Happened on October 7 — and What Did Not

In the chaos of the first hours and days, there was a lot of misinformation; some because of the difficult circumstances, some intentionally to provoke outrage. There was no need to exaggerate, what happened was terrible enough. You may argue about the exact legal terms, but it is undeniable that serious acts of violence were committed by Palestinians. Trying to whitewash what Hamas and others did is just as bad as denying Israeli crimes. Even if you are pro-Palestinian, you have to admit some of them did commit acts that could amount to terrorism; that's not the same as blaming all Palestinians. The Palestinians are not a monolith, they are a diverse group of people, just like any other nation, and you have to differentiate between the different actors. And you have to look at these events in a broader historical context to understand them, because this story did not begin on October 7. But that's another topic on its own, too big to deal with here.

Following the October 7 attack, from the very beginning, propaganda on both sides distorted the story. One version, narrated by much of the mainstream media, claimed that Palestinian terrorists attacked Israel solely because of their hatred of Jews, and their only aim was to kill and rape as many of them as possible. The Palestinians—not just Hamas —were often called or compared to Nazis, and the event was frequently labeled a Holocaust or genocide. I don't want to delve into this narrative; everyone has already heard it, there was no way to avoid it.

I don't want to deal with those opinions either that claim Hamas did nothing wrong, and I am sure people with this view are a tiny minority. The vast majority of even those who support the Palestinian cause agree that terrible things were committed by Palestinians on that day, including Hamas. But in their view it was a military operation with strategic goals that went wrong. I lean toward this view, but I do not agree with the goals of Hamas and its partners to target civilians instead of limiting their actions strictly to military operations, including taking prisoners of war which is permitted under the Geneva Conventions. A counterargument is that everyone in Israel, except children and the elderly, is either an active-duty, reserve, or capable former IDF soldier, and there is some truth to this.

Based on what's known, and confirmed by an unlikely source, the "military operation gone wrong" version is likely, and here is briefly how the events unfolded according to it.

Hamas in cooperation with other militant groups planned this attack for a long time. They did so in plain sight, even posting on social media about military training. BBC identified 5 groups that took part in the attack, and the bases in Gaza where they trained—some visible from the Israeli side of the border, so close to it.[5]

Hamas had a strategic aim in mind: to launch a commando-style assault on four military bases surrounding Gaza and to kill or take hostage as many Israeli soldiers as possible, and a similar assault on local Israeli communities to seize civilian hostages. The aim was to trade the hostages for Palestinian prisoners, thousands of whom are in Israeli jails, including women and children, often held without a military trial or even charges. To the Palestinian public, these prisoners are no less hostages.

Hamas stormed military bases and the Israeli settlements of Be'eri and Kfar Azza. That is why about a third of the 1,200 Israelis killed that day were soldiers, police or armed guards. The Nova music festival wasn't a target, Hamas didn't know it was happening, they just accidentally stumbled upon it. There were unexpected clashes with security guards, and the attack on festivalgoers turned especially gruesome.[6]

But it wasn't only Hamas that attacked alone and there were several waves of attacks. Hamas acted in cooperation with other Palestinian militant groups, and there were also unaffiliated—even hostile—terrorist groups, criminals and civilian mobs who entered Israeli territory after the fence was opened at different points. This is an important aspect and we must differentiate between the various actors and their roles and deeds.

While the Israeli authorities investigate themselves over why the response was so slow, a very important issue that needs to be addressed is the killing of Israeli citizens by Israeli forces. Almost totally unreported in Western mainstream media, Israeli media did discuss it from the first days, and more and more details were revealed along the way. A number of tanks were involved, and 28 attack helicopters fired all the ammunition they had to stop Palestinians from returning to Gaza "at all costs." An Israeli Air Force officer reportedly said to media, "This was a mass Hannibal"—it refers to the famous military directive by which Israel can kill its own citizens rather than allowing them to be captured. This should also be carefully investigated by independent bodies: the relatives of the victims as much as the world must know the details.

A very disturbing part of the story is all the things that did not happen at all. While Western media kept quiet about some of the most crucial information, it was quick to spread unverified claims. Many of these were outrageous lies, made up with clear intent to harm—some of these accusations truly amount to blood libels.

What happened from a Palestinian perspective

While sympathy is due to all innocent victims of the October 7 attack, most of whom were Israelis, we should also consider the events from the Palestinian perspective. Some compare what happened to a prison breakout, which is not totally unfounded. Gaza is often called the world's biggest open-air prison; yes, there used to be pleasant cities within this small strip of land along the Mediterranean (about

the same size as Detroit or Vienna), but it was under a complete blockade from 2007, not only from the Israeli side but also from Egypt. Gazans were also strictly limited in using their own sea; fishermen got shot if they went too far out. People were constantly surveilled as in a prison, and regularly killed in smaller or larger number. In 2018–2019, when Palestinians in Gaza protested peacefully each Friday against the "prison conditions" in what became known as the "Great March of Return," Israeli forces systematically fired on the unarmed demonstrators; during the 18 months the protests lasted, 214 protesters, including 46 children, were killed and over 8,000 were wounded by live ammunition, including many who were left permanently disabled.[7] You can understand the anger and frustration, and you can't say that the people of Gaza didn't try the peaceful way—they did, but the world, as always, chose to look away.

For Palestinians in Gaza, this fence was a symbol of imprisonment, and for them seeing it breached was something like seeing the Berlin Wall come down for Eastern Europeans. It was a moment of brief freedom, which they knew even back then would have terrible consequences.

"It was unbelievable. It felt surreal," writes a Palestinian author from their perspective in *Al Jazeera*. "In this context, seeing those images and videos of the prison wall torn down in Gaza was liberating. Their symbolic power cannot be overstated."

But the initial euphoria of seeing the apartheid wall come down was quickly overtaken by the terrifying realization of what would come next.

"My conversations with peers and friends, my group chats, phone calls – all were dominated by the same dark premonition," the author says: "They are going to kill us all."[8]

A Military Operation Gone Wrong

In their June 2024 issue, the right-wing and staunch pro-Likud *Israel Hayom* confirmed in an article,[9] although it certainly wasn't their intention, that the October 7 attack was indeed intended to be a military operation. They spin the story as much as possible, use racist language, illogical arguments, and repeat baseless claims that were debunked before they wrote their piece—but if you focus on some of the details, you get the true picture. All the following quotes in this section come from this article, with my emphasis of important wordings added.

According to the report, senior Hamas official Izz ad-Din al-Haddad, known as "Abu Saheeb," issued written instructions to the fighters before the attack, which were later found by the IDF.

> The order concludes by summarizing the main goal of the October 7 operation: "**Take a large number of soldiers prisoner** in the first moments (of the fighting) and send them into the Gaza Strip."
>
> While Abu Saheeb's military **order does not** explicitly **instruct** his men **to kidnap and murder civilians or commit atrocities** such as beheadings and sexual crimes, such horrors occurred on a wide scale...

The "wide-scale" claim is unsubstantiated, especially the beheadings (as we will see it a bit later) and whatever atrocities happened, it is uncertain who committed them. What's certain is that the Hamas order was clear; it was meant to be a military operation.

If the following quotes were Hamas public statements, they wouldn't be significant at all, you could say it's just propaganda intended to present themselves favorably to an international audience. But these are intercepted internal, private communications:

> Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader in Gaza and architect of the surprise attack, claimed in communications with his people during the war that "things got out of control." He stated, "**People got carried away, and it shouldn't have happened.**" An official Hamas document from January also claimed that **the October 7 attack was aimed only at military sites to capture soldiers** and release prisoners in exchange. "The religion of Islam forbids intentional harm to women, children, and the elderly," it stated. "Hamas, as a disciplined movement, adheres to these rules."

Describing events at one of the kibbutzim, *Israel Hayom* writes the following:

> ...in the "Young Neighborhood," which is closer to the Gaza border, the terrorists acted systematically to kidnap as many as possible. They entered each and every one of the 16 houses there. In total, they murdered three residents and kidnapped seven others. Only four of the neighborhood's residents who were at home that day were spared after managing to lock themselves in the safe room. "**Those who resisted them were murdered, and those who didn't resist – were kidnapped**," one of them recounted.

The important point is that Hamas did not kill just for the fun of it, as claimed by pro-Israel narratives, but shot only those who resisted. Shooting civilians is still a crime, but there is a huge difference. Heroic as it may be, resisting is engaging in fight.

A handwritten document, captured by the IDF, details the full scope of "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation.

> According to the document, Hamas' original goal was to take control of 221 settlements in the south, including the cities of Netivot, Ofakim, and Sderot,

> and expel the "settlers" from them. These were supposed to flee [...] using their own cars, with "priority to (**expelling**) **women and children, and taking men aged 17-50 as hostages**."

Let me repeat it: "expelling women and children," and "taking men aged 17-50 as hostages." Doesn't this suggest that the attack wasn't against civilians, but to take what Hamas considered potential soldiers as prisoners of war? That it was, indeed, intended to be a military operation?

But the military operation went wrong, and one of the reasons for that is that other terrorist groups and civilians got involved. And it seems Hamas had a role in it and bears responsibility for this blunder.

Involvement of terrorist elements and civilian mobs

An important aspect that is rarely emphasized is that trough the open fences, other militant groups, ISIS-type terrorists, criminals and mobs infiltrated either to loot, take part in kidnappings, or—yes, in some cases—to kill Jews. You can't deny there is very deep hatred on both sides, and there are individuals in both camps who are capable of such acts. Probably in every country there are people who hate another group so much that they want to see them dead. And in every civil unrest, there is an element of these fanatic haters, brainless followers, and opportunistic criminals. Without a doubt, many of the gruesome killings were committed by these types of people, although it is also undeniable that the Hamas-alliance also killed civilians.

One of the few accounts that describes the attack in detail is the same *Israel Hayom* article. It explains the attack, how Palestinian civilians were incited, and the waves.

> The Shin Bet and Military Intelligence Directorate define the Nukhba terrorists [Hamas's elite commando unit], hundreds of whom first stormed the Gaza border communities and bases, as the "first wave" of the attack, the one that paved the

> way for the waves that followed. Shortly after the first wave attack began, an announcement started to be heard in Gaza's mosques: From the powerful loudspeakers came the voice of Mohammed Deif, the head of Hamas's military wing, calling on anyone who could take a rifle, even a knife or an axe, to join the raid into Israel.
>
> Similar instructions were given simultaneously through Hamas' media outlets in the Gaza Strip and passed by word of mouth. These incitement calls, a move undoubtedly carefully planned in advance by Hamas, were intended to flood the Gaza border communities with as many vengeful and hate-filled Gaza residents as possible, who would enter Israel under the cover of the breaches provided by the first wave of the Nukhba force. If you will, a reserve mobilization.

I couldn't find another source confirming that Hamas used mosque loudspeakers on October 7 to urge civilians to cross into Israel after the fence was breached, but it cannot be ruled out and the claim has to be investigated. If true, Hamas is responsible for incitement, as well as for endangering civilians and undermining the military operation by drawing them into a deadly confrontation with the IDF.

> Hundreds of those who quickly responded to these calls were armed Hamas members not affiliated with the Nukhba forces, or members of **other terrorist** organizations who were not privy to the attack plans.

Here, the "other terrorist organizations" part is important, because there was an attempt after the attack to blame everything on Hamas.

> The "first wave" and "second wave" of armed individuals were not the only forces that invaded Israeli territory. They were joined by an additional wave, a third, of what is called in the Israeli

> intelligence community "**looters**" or "**mob**." These were civilians, not necessarily armed with firearms, who simply took advantage of the opportunity presented to them. "There were civilians who got the understanding — and someone took care to create this understanding — that the fence had fallen," says a military source. "As a result, so many civilians entered Israel, some of whom say in interrogations that they just wanted to infiltrate Israel to **look for work**. There was a mixed crowd of all types of people there, including **12-year-old children**."
>
> In police interrogations of some of the "mob" caught in Israeli territory, they said that the calls in the mosques and the rumor about the breached border fence were the catalyst that caused them to storm the Gaza border communities. "There are quite a few people who say in interrogations, 'We heard Mohammed Deif in the mosque, we took a knife, and our goal was to slaughter Jews,'" a police source said.

As pointed out earlier, long-standing hatred undeniably exists between Palestinians and Israeli Jews, and there are extremist elements on both sides, but it is clear that the crowd that entered Israel was mixed: it included even children and others naive enough to believe they might find work.

These were the important points of the article confirming the "military operation gone wrong" version; the rest consists of inflammatory rhetoric. It is still interesting, though, to see how media manipulation works. The article was written in June 2024, by which time many of these claims had been discredited in the Israeli media, yet *Israel Hayom* claims that "several beheaded bodies were found, a large part of the bodies of sex crime victims were found tied and bound, and in some cases, bodies were found with their genitals mutilated." These accusations, as we will see later, are based on malicious fabrications.

The intent was to set the mood, and now, that the audience has been outraged enough, Hamas is compared to the Nazis. Ironically, saying it's "in their culture" echoes Nazi rhetoric.

> "October 7 was part of Hamas' attempt to eliminate the Jewish population in Israel by killing as many people as possible and expelling others," says historian Prof. Danny Orbach from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. "**Both in the case of Hamas and in the case of the Nazis, there was an 'attempt at mass extermination'**, but the logic behind the extermination mechanism was different. While the Nazis wanted to eliminate the Jews as quickly and efficiently as possible, Hamas knew it couldn't kill all the Jews of Israel, only those who would be under its control during the invasion hours."
>
> "**Hamas' goal was** not only to murder people, but **to demonstrate the dominance of one group over another through torture and mutilation**," he says. "Therefore, the cruelty had to be as graphic as possible, because **that's how you show your superiority in this culture**."

If you read between the lines, the article reveals the truth —thank you, *Israel Hayom*, for publishing these details—and it also clearly shows how propaganda is used to demonize and incite.

War Crimes, Terrorism, and Mob Violence

Hamas, ISIS-type terrorists, and some Palestinian civilians carried out acts that can be characterized as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or terrorism. War crimes are serious violations of the laws of war during an armed conflict (e.g., attacking civilians, hostage-taking, torture). Crimes against humanity are widespread or systematic attacks against a civilian population (e.g., murder, deportation, rape, apartheid), committed in peace or war, as part of a policy or pattern. Terrorism is intentional violence against civilians to intimidate or coerce. These categories can overlap; "terrorism" describes the purpose/method, "war crime" describes the legal breach under International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and crimes against humanity are defined by their scale and systematic nature. Regardless of how you define what happened on October 7, civilians were targeted and killed on a large scale. Mind you, it is also important to apply these standards consistently and label intentional attacks on civilians the same regardless of who commits them. The important issue, in my opinion, is not whether Hamas is a terrorist group or not, but that we apply the same standards to the IDF, US forces, or any other armed group.

Many definitions of terrorism wrongly—and deliberately—limit it to non-state actors. The US State Department reporting statute (22 U.S.C. §2656f) defines terrorism as acts by subnational groups or clandestine agents, i.e., non-state actors, thus preventing the US government from being held responsible for "terrorism" under its own law. Israel similarly frames "terrorism" as violence carried out only by non-state actors, defining itself exclusively as a state responding to security threats, which allows it to exempt its own military operations from the category of terrorism by definition. By contrast, other frameworks define terrorism by purpose rather than the actor, e.g., UN Security Council Resolution 1566 describes it without restricting it to non-state perpetrators. The point is, you have to be consistent, and

acknowledge state terrorism when a state commits acts of terrorism. It's very telling which countries do not do that.

Concerning the events of October 7, apart from determining the type of the crimes, it is important to find out which crime was perpetrated by who. Hamas is undeniably responsible for many civilian deaths, but attributing all atrocities to them is not accurate. It is important to note that, while some civilians were involved in crimes, condemning all the people of Gaza is also wrong. Yet this is exactly what Israeli leaders and pro-Israel media are attempting to do: blur distinctions and fold everything together. They blame everything on Hamas, while holding the entire Gazan population collectively guilty.

"Hamas is ISIS"

In an attempt to prove to the world how cruel Hamas is, there was a very deliberate campaign to equate it with ISIS. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a joint news conference in Israel alongside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that what Hamas did "brings to mind the worst of ISIS." Netanyahu also made a direct connection between the two terrorist organizations, affirming, "Hamas is ISIS."

This comes as Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claimed an ISIS flag was found. "Hamas brought ISIS flags to massacre Israeli children, women and men," the IDF posted on X (formerly known as Twitter), with a photo of the ISIS flag.[10]

Israel went into overdrive promoting this line; there has been a concerted messaging campaign backed by the Israeli government and its supporters to link Hamas with Islamic State (ISIS). This campaign involved an extensive advertising campaign on social media sites such as YouTube and X using, on the latter, the hashtag #HamasIsISIS, which has been promoted by Israeli government officials as well as by pro-Israel activists.[11]

It is a propaganda catchphrase Netanyahu invented—and not recently, but nine years earlier. Except, back then, the campaign wasn't so successful.

In 2014, a day after ISIS posted the video of journalist James Foley's killing, Netanyahu debuted his latest catchphrase: "Hamas is ISIS. ISIS is Hamas." He voiced the slogan at a news conference, on social media, and even at his weekly Cabinet meeting Sunday.[12] But back then, the comparisons between Hamas and ISIS were met with reservations by Israel's allies and enemies alike.

This comparison is not true for many reasons; it is designed to make Hamas look worse than it actually is. In fact, the two groups are mortal enemies.

In 2015, Hamas launched a crackdown on radical Islamists following a series of unclaimed bombings. Undeterred by a statement issued by ISIS demanding an end to the crackdown, Hamas executed a 27 year old ISIS leader.[13] In 2018, ISIS declared war on Hamas by executing what it said was a collaborator.[14] As *The Jewish News of Northern California* put it, "Hamas and ISIS hate each other almost as much as they hate Israel."[15]

Hamas is *not* ISIS

Hamas—an acronym for *Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya* ("Islamic Resistance Movement")—emerged from the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, a transnational Islamist organization with offshoots around the world. Hamas is a fundamentalist Sunni Islamic movement, but not radical Islamist, with pragmatic alliances including Shia Iran. Hamas is usually portrayed as a group that hates Jews, but their 2017 policy document says their conflict is with Zionism, not Jews as Jews. An article by *The New York Times* confirms the quadriplegic co-founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, said after his release from prison in 1997: "I want to proclaim loudly to the world that we are not fighting Jews because they are Jews," but against the occupation. In an interview recorded also in the 1990s, the sheikh said:

> We don't hate the Jews and fight them because they are Jews. They are people of religion and we are

> people of religion. We love all people of religion. If my brother, who has the same religion and parents as me takes my home and expels me from my land, I will fight him. So when a Jew takes my home and expels me, I will fight him as well. We don't hate the Jews, we only want them to give us our rights.[16]

Hamas claims it seeks to operate within a modern democratic system; it functions as a political party and a local governing authority that provides all the usual services to its citizens. (So all doctors, ambulance workers or even garbage collectors are automatically connected to Hamas.) It was democratically elected in 2006, but governance in Gaza since then has often been characterized as authoritarian, with restrictions on opposition and civil society. Hamas is not an armed group, at least officially, but it maintains an armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades (including the special Nukhba unit). Fundamentally, Hamas describes itself as a national-liberation movement, and claims to have only attacked Israeli targets. The record shows that victims include Israeli civilians, and some foreign civilians as well.

Hamas—not just its military wing—is proscribed as a terrorist organization by the US, UK, and EU. Yet at a time when the former leader of Syria's al-Qaeda branch, who until recently had a US$10 million bounty on his head by the US State Department, meets as a best friend with leaders of these very same countries, the concept of who is proscribed as a terrorist has totally lost its meaning.

ISIS, on the other hand, is clearly a terrorist organization, the perfect example of it. It is a Salafi-Wahhabi group described as *jihadist* or *takfiri*, that seeks to rebuild the Islamic caliphate and impose Sharia law throughout the region. ISIS has committed heinous and very graphic crimes, not only against enemy combatants but civilians—ethnic and religious minorities but also moderate Sunnis—whom they brand apostates. Interestingly, they virtually have never attacked Israel. ISIS are the ideological heirs of the Salafi-Wahhabi terrorists that the CIA created in Afghanistan. The literalist Salafi and Wahhabi ideologies are actually a result of

resistance against British colonial rule; ironically, Wahhabism was later beefed up by the same British colonizers in Arabia to fight the Ottomans. They needed Muslim allies so radical that they would kill other Muslims if they didn't follow their Wahhabi interpretation of the faith. The term takfiri relates to the act of declaring a fellow Muslim an unbeliever (apostate) and thus allowing him to be killed.

ISIS views Hamas as an apostate movement, partly because Hamas participated in Palestinian democratic elections, which the Islamic State perceives as putting man-made law above God's law. Another factor is Hamas' cooperation with Egypt, which has often played a role as mediator between Hamas and Israel, while ISIS has been at war with the Egyptian government since at least 2013.[17]

So why is the comparison if they are so different? Well, we know the why: to demonize Hamas. But on what grounds? An ISIS flag was found in Kibbutz Sufa following the attack. How did the ISIS flag get there? "Some ISIS members could have gotten in," Dr. Lorenzo Vidino, director of the Program on Extremism at George Washington University, told *NewsNation*.[18] But maybe they weren't ISIS. Another hypothesis, according to Wassim Nasr, is that the flag belonged to a member of Jaish al-Ummah ("the army of believers"), a jihadist organization ideologically closer to al-Qaeda, and their flag is very similar. No one from Jaish al-Ummah claimed responsibility.[19] It cannot be ruled out either that the flag was planted by the IDF. However it is, it does not prove "Hamas is ISIS."

A Very Slow Response — Timeline and Causes

The first reaction of many people, upon hearing the news, was: why did the response take so long? Let's see what we know happened, how the situation unfolded, and the timeline of events.

06:30—Rocket barrage and infiltrations began; first alarms at IDF/IAF (Israeli Air Force). By **06:51** the IAF logged a sea infiltration at Zikim. **07:00** two AH-64 Apache helicopters at Ramat David lifted off; they reached the Zikim area around **07:30** under MANPADS fire.

08:10—Additional Apaches launched from Ramon toward Be'eri to protect a Black Hawk helicopter that was dropping off a commando team (Shaldag). By **08:18** the IAF reported 3 UAVs, 5 helicopters, and 6 fighter jets already engaged along the fence and Gaza periphery. By midday, 11 attack helicopters were airborne, a number that grew to 28 during the day.

Ground posture at H-hour—The Gaza Division had 671 soldiers in sector across 14 companies, but early tasking and situational awareness were fractured, slowing coherent reinforcement to specific communities.

Nova festival (Re'im site)—Gunmen struck traffic choke points around the site at **06:40**, collapsing the perimeter along Route 232. The first on-scene responders were scattered local police and a small Border Police team arriving after **07:15-07:30**, attempting to open an escape lane under fire; several officers were hit. Rotary-wing cover reached the area by roughly **08:30-09:00**, enabling ad-hoc extractions. Larger IDF elements (infantry with limited armor support) did not stabilize the junctions or secure organized evacuation routes until early afternoon (**12:00-14:00**, although *Haaretz* says as late as **15:00**). Systematic sweeps, medical evacuation, and body recovery continued into the evening.

Nahal Oz (military outpost & kibbutz)—First tanks were logged at the outpost at **08:09** (as fighting raged), but

sustained infantry reinforcement to the kibbutz wasn't recorded until **13:36**, with forces clearing the base by late afternoon; multiple reconstructions noted a 7-hour gap before significant infantry relief at the community.

Be'eri—Local standby squads and small police/IDF elements fought for hours; larger formations and armor arrived ad hoc, with full control only much later (into Oct 8), underscoring how reinforcements were staggered across sites rather than massed quickly at the worst hit points.

Nir Oz—A formal IDF readout says the first troops reached only after the last attackers had already withdrawn, highlighting just how uneven the reinforcement timeline was across neighboring communities.

An IDF investigation found that the slow response on the day of the Hamas attack was due to chaos and commanders' denial. It also mentioned an "extreme delay in sending reinforcements," although it didn't elaborate on this very important question further.

> While there are a near limitless number of missteps that led to the failure to stop and mitigate Hamas's invasion of southern Israel on October 7, including the extreme delay in sending reinforcements, two key stunning reasons clarified by the IDF probes on Thursday were denial by commanders that they had been beaten – and utter chaos at IDF headquarters.[20]

However, others looked into what caused the "extreme delay," and suggested different reasons.

The Times of Israel reported that two Commando Brigade companies were sent to the West Bank two days before October 7—reducing high-readiness forces available to rush south.[21]

The Wall Street Journal noted that the attack struck on Simchat Torah, when fewer troops than usual were along the border—one reason reinforcements were thin at the outset.[22]

A recount in *Commentary* cited shortage of working jeeps and downed surveillance assets, which impeded mobility and situational awareness for reinforcing units.[23]

According to *Haaretz*, one of the police's advantages is the ability to respond quickly, but that day the force didn't fully exploit the manpower they had in the area. The police didn't send enough officers to southern Israel following Hamas' attack on October 7, and even hours later, they still didn't send sufficient reinforcements, a former senior police officer said.[24]

A *Haaretz* summary of the IDF probes said reinforcements were sent to the wrong places, delaying relief to the south. Investigations into October 7 found that IDF commanders were unaware of battle locations and that troops were sent to cities instead of Gaza border communities. The Gaza Division also lacked intel for hours, yet its commander refused to report defeat.[25]

The Times of Israel's readout of the Nir Oz probe reported that the Gaza Division failed to understand the situation and dispatched troops to neighboring areas—but not to Nir Oz, contributing to hours-long exposure.[26]

The Hannibal Directive — Stop the Return to Gaza "At All Costs"

The Hannibal directive was an IDF procedure (originating in 1986) instructing forces to prevent the abduction of an Israeli soldier by any means necessary—even if those actions risked killing the captive. It was officially rescinded in 2016 after years of controversy over proportionality and potential harm to civilians, though it appears it was implemented on October 7.

In Israeli media there were reports from the very beginning, as early as October 9, and more and more confirmations surfaced along the weeks and months. In Western media, apart from pro-Palestinian and alternative outlets, not much was reported with the exception of the Australian state broadcaster ABC, which wrote a quite extensive piece on it—although almost a year later.

Israel's centrist establishment outlet, *Ynet*, reported at the end of 2023 that the IDF admitted it had killed its own citizens on October 7 in "friendly fire," but claimed it would be wrong on moral grounds (!) to investigate the cases.

> Casualties fell as a result of friendly fire on October 7, but the IDF believes that beyond the operational investigations of the events, it would not be morally sound to investigate these incidents due to the immense and complex quantity of them that took place in the kibbutzim and southern Israeli communities due to the challenging situations the soldiers were in at the time.[27]

A later IDF investigation released in July 2024 tried to shift the blame. They repeatedly used the conditional mood when talking about who killed the victims, claiming Hamas is "likely" responsible for the deaths of those who died inside the house that was shelled by an IDF tank. The report doesn't deny that one Israeli person was killed by IDF

shrapnel, it just notes it is a claim by the deceased's wife. This is the relevant part from the article:

> During the standoff, a tank fired at the home, raising concerns that the 13 hostages inside were killed by friendly fire. The military concluded that they were likely killed by Hamas militants, not Israeli shelling, although it was unclear how it reached that conclusion, and the report called for additional tests.
>
> Investigators "determined that, based on the information reviewed and to the best of their understanding, no civilians inside the building were harmed by tank shell fire," the report said, although it said two Israeli civilians were hit by shrapnel outside the building. One of those civilians died, according to the man's wife.
>
> It also said commanders on the scene made "professional and responsible decisions" in ordering the tank strike. It said there had been a joint decision by various commanders after hearing gunshots within the house and militants saying they planned to kill the hostages and themselves.
>
> "The team determined that most of the hostages were likely murdered by the terrorists," the report said.[28]

Reports of tank fire

The event the article refers to happened in Kibbutz Be'eri, and it was reported on October 9 on *Haboker Hazeh* ("This Morning") hosted by Aryeh Golan, on the state broadcaster Kan.[29] The survivor, 44-year-old mother of three Yasmin Porat, appeared a few days later, on October 12, in a half-hour interview with Israel's Channel 12,[30] and told her story. However, it contradicts the IDF version. The video of the TV interview can be set to display English auto-translation, and the pro-Palestinian outlet *Electronic Intifada* translated the audio report by Kan with Yasmin Porat.

The following are some of the main points of the interview, as published by *Electronic Intifada*.

Porat had been at the Nova rave when the Hamas assault began with missiles and motorized paragliders. She and her partner Tal Katz escaped by car to nearby Kibbutz Be'eri where they sought refuge in the house of a couple called Adi and Hadas Dagan. After the Palestinian fighters found them they were all taken to another house, where eight people were already being held captive and one person was dead.

Porat said that the wife of the dead man "told us that when they [the Hamas fighters] tried to enter, the guy tried to prevent them from entering and grabbed the door. They shot at the door and he was killed. They did not execute them."

"They were very humane towards us," Porat said in her Channel 12 interview. She recalled that one Palestinian fighter who spoke Hebrew, "told me, 'Look at me well, we're not going to kill you. We want to take you to Gaza. We are not going to kill you. So be calm, you're not going to die.' That's what he told me, in those words."

In the Channel 12 interview, Porat elaborated that although the Palestinian fighters all had loaded weapons, she never saw them shoot captives or threaten them with their guns.

About eight hours after the start of the Hamas attack and about half an hour after Porat's calls to the police, Israeli forces arrived and chaos ensued, Porat told Kan.

"At first there was no [Israeli] security force with us," Porat recalled, noting that her first call to the Israeli police went unanswered. "We were the ones who called the police, together with the abductors because the abductors wanted the police to arrive. Because their objective was to kidnap us to Gaza."

"They understand that soldiers will not kill hostages. So they want to come out with us alive and for the police to permit it," Porat told Channel 12.

After their brief conversation, the four dozen or so Palestinian fighters and their dozen Israeli prisoners awaited the arrival of the army, with some of the group spilling outside to the garden for relief from the afternoon heat.

Israeli forces announced their arrival with a hail of gunfire, catching the fighters and their Israeli captives by surprise.

"We were outside and suddenly there was a volley of bullets at us from the [Israeli unit] YAMAM. We all started running to find cover," Porat told Channel 12.

Porat said she surrendered to the Israeli soldiers half an hour into the fierce gun battle that consisted of "tens and hundreds and thousands of bullets and mortars flying in the air," and that one of the Palestinian fighters, a commander, decided to surrender and used her in effect as a human shield.

"He starts to disrobe," Porat recalled to Kan's Aryeh Golan. "He calls to me and he starts to leave the house with me, under fire. At that time I yell to the [Israeli commandos] … when they can hear me, to stop firing."

"And then they heard me and stopped firing," she added. "I see people from the kibbutz on the lawn. There are five or six hostages lying on the ground outside. Just like sheep to the slaughter, between the shooting of our commandos and the terrorists."

"The terrorists shot them?" Golan asked.

"No, they were killed by the crossfire," Porat responded. "Understand there was very, very heavy crossfire."

Golan pressed Porat: "So our forces may have shot them?"

"Undoubtedly," the former captive responded, and added, "They eliminated everyone, including the hostages because there was very, very heavy crossfire."

"After insane crossfire, two tank shells were shot into the house. It's a small kibbutz house, nothing big," Porat explained.

Porat and the man who took her captive both survived. The Palestinian was taken prisoner by Israeli forces. But according to Porat, almost everyone else in the settlement was killed, wounded or missing, believed to have been taken to Gaza.[31]

A *Haaretz* article, published on October 20, confirms that IDF tanks fired at houses in Kibbutz Be'eri, based on the tale of Tuval Escapa, who lost his partner in the fighting.

> According to him, it was only on Monday night and only after the commanders on the ground made difficult decisions — including shelling houses with their occupants in order to eliminate the terrorists along with the hostages — that the IDF completed the takeover of the kibbutz. The price was terrible: at least 112 Be'eri residents were killed. Others were kidnapped. The day before yesterday, 11 days after the massacre, the bodies of a mother and son were discovered in one of the destroyed houses. It is estimated that additional bodies are still buried among the rubble.[32]

The New York Times conducted an investigation about the case, based on interviews with scores of survivors and witnesses as well as on videos, text messages and recordings of phone calls, and in its article published on December 23, it attributed one civilian death to Israeli action and identified the commander who gave the order to shoot at the house.

> With the military in disarray, Brig. Gen. Barak Hiram had suddenly been placed in charge of the Israeli effort to take back Be'eri and the surrounding area.
>
> As the dusk approached, the SWAT commander and General Hiram began to argue. The SWAT commander thought more kidnappers might surrender. The general wanted the situation resolved by nightfall.
>
> Minutes later, the militants launched a rocket-propelled grenade, according to the general and other witnesses who spoke to The Times.
>
> "The negotiations are over," General Hiram recalled telling the tank commander. "Break in, even at the cost of civilian casualties."

> The tank fired two light shells at the house.
>
> Shrapnel from the second shell hit Mr. Dagan in the neck, severing an artery and killing him, his wife said.
>
> During the melee, the kidnappers were also killed.
>
> Only two of the 14 hostages — Ms. Dagan and Ms. Porat — survived.[33]

The Israeli right sees greatness in Barak Hiram's actions —he has been embraced by some journalists and media outlets. According to Amit Segal, an influential political commentator with Israel's top-rated Channel 12 News, "the army needs a lot more Hirams and many fewer officers of the type who don't take initiative." National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir tweeted "We need more like him," and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich labeled him a "hero of Israel." By contrast, former Labor Party leader Shelly Yacimovich wrote in a column in *Ynet* not long afterward, referring to the Be'eri incident, that, "Heroes of Israel defend Israel's children, they don't kill them."[34]

But it seems Brig. Gen. Barak Hiram wasn't the only one to order tanks to shoot at civilian houses. In another location, Kibbutz Holit, an Israeli tank gunner was ordered by a "panicked soldier" to fire tank shells into houses, but she says she refused and instead fired a machine gun. Identified only as "Karni," the 20-year-old captain was part of an all-female tank unit. An interview about them was aired by N12News and shared on the official X account of Israel Nitzan, a veteran Israeli diplomat, on November 25, 2023. The relevant part of the interview with Karni starts at around 8:50.[35] It goes:

> "The soldier points and tells me, 'shoot there — the terrorists are there,'" Karni recounts in the footage, noting that when she asked "are there civilians there?," her compatriot simply replied, "I don't know," and ordered her to "just shoot" a tank round into the buildings anyway.

> Ultimately, she recalled, "I decided not to shoot" as "this is an Israeli community." Instead, she said, "I fired with my machine gun at a house."

"The comments in N12's report add to a growing body of evidence demonstrating that shelling by Israeli tanks was responsible for many of the casualties incurred in Israeli kibbutzim," says Max Blumenthal, editor of *The Grayzone* investigative website.[36]

Tanks also fired at cars headed to Gaza, without knowing if there were captive Israelis in them. Tank officers have confirmed they applied their own interpretation of the directive when firing on vehicles returning to Gaza, potentially with Israelis on board.

"My gut feeling told me that they [IDF soldiers] could be on them," captain Bar Zonshein told Israel's Channel 13.

He was asked: "So you might be killing them with that action? They are your soldiers."

"Right," he replied, "but I decided that this is the right decision, that it's better to stop the kidnapping, that they won't be taken."[37]

Reports of helicopter fire

It wasn't only tanks that fired at Kibbutz Be'eri, but also an Israeli Apache helicopter, according to testimony from Erez Tidhar, a military veteran who was on the scene on October 7 as a rescue and evacuation volunteer for the Eitam unit.

> "Every minute a missile comes down on you, every minute," Tidhar recalled. "And suddenly you see a missile from a helicopter that fires into the kibbutz. You say to yourself, 'I don't get it. An IDF helicopter firing into an Israeli kibbutz.' And then you see a tank driving through the streets of the kibbutz flanking the cannon and it fires a shell into a house. These are things you cannot comprehend."

The report was aired on Israeli state broadcaster Kan, available in Hebrew on their website,[38] or the relevant part with English subtitles in an *Uncaptured Media* article.[39] But Tidhar's testimony is not the only account of a helicopter firing missiles into an Israeli settlement.

A November 2023 *Ynet* article said "pilots fired at those crossing the fence, and also right inside the settlements." The first helicopters were launched from the north of the country and arrived near Gaza about an hour after the fighting began. The article explains the ferocity of the fight and the massive amounts of ammunition fired.

> Throughout the day of fighting, 28 attack helicopters fired all the ammunition in their bellies, in reloading rounds. This involved hundreds of 30mm cannon shells (the effect of a grenade for each shell) as well as Hellfire missiles. The rate of fire against the thousands of terrorists was tremendous at first, and only at a certain point did the pilots begin to slow down the attacks and carefully choose their targets.[40]

A *Mako* article talked about much higher numbers; they wrote "Squadron 113 fired over a hundred [Hellfire] missiles and thousands of shells."[41] According to the Air Force, in the first four hours of the fighting, helicopters and fighter jets attacked about 300 targets, most of them in Israeli territory.

At one point, the Apache pilots realized that all restrictions had to be bypassed and some of them began to spray the terrorists with their cannons on their own, without orders from higher-ups.

Commander of the 190th Squadron, Lt. Col. A., directed the air fighters to shoot at everything they saw in the fence area, and at one point they even attacked an IDF post with besieged soldiers to help the fighters of Squadron 13 storm it and free it.

In one case, as part of the lifting of restrictions he had taken upon himself, he fired at a range of only 20 meters from the houses of one of the kibbutzim to cover the deputy commander of Division 80.[42]

"I'm in the air on one of the sorties, we've already been told there are hostages," recalled Lt. Col. A.

And then what do we do? How do we shoot at someone who is returning towards the border?

"A very difficult dilemma," Lt. Col. A. admitted. "You look through the scope, you see what's happening there. [...] And I choose targets such that I tell myself that the chance that I will shoot at kidnapped people here is low."[43]

"This was a mass Hannibal"

In an article published in January 2024, *Ynet* wrote that the IDF ordered all of its combat units to implement the "Hannibal Procedure," although without clearly saying this specific name. The order was to stop "at all costs" any attempt by Hamas terrorists to return to Gaza, despite the fear that some of them had hostages.[44]

In July 2024, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* revealed that commanders in the IDF gave the order at three separate locations, explicitly referencing the Hannibal Directive.

One of these orders was given when an observation post reported that someone had been kidnapped at the Erez border crossing. "Hannibal at Erez," was the order by the divisional headquarters, adding "dispatch a Zik," The Zik is an unmanned assault drone, which means the order was to target both the hostage takers and hostage.

According to the *Haaretz* article, the Israeli army confirmed that the Hannibal procedure was employed at two other locations as well: the Re'im army base, where the divisional headquarters were located, and the Nahal Oz outpost in which female spotters were based. In the attack, seven soldiers were kidnapped and 53 killed.

A "very senior IDF source" confirmed to *Haaretz* that the Hannibal procedure was indeed employed on October 7, but the source could not specify who gave the order, only that it was not the divisional commander. According to the source, responsibility for authorizing its implementation perhaps will be clarified through investigations conducted after the conclusion of the war.[45]

A former Israeli officer, Air Force Colonel Nof Erez, told a *Haaretz* podcast that the directive was not specifically ordered but was "apparently applied" by responding aircrews.

"This was a mass Hannibal. It was tons and tons of openings in the fence, and thousands of people in every type of vehicle, some with hostages and some without," Colonel Erez said.[46]

Authorities admit some "friendly fire" cases, but avoid using the term Hannibal or talking about numbers, especially large numbers. The IDF's July 2024 investigation admitted, or at least didn't deny, that one person died due to tank shelling in Kibbutz Be'eri, as we saw it earlier. In another case, an IDF investigation found a female Nir Oz resident was "likely" killed by helicopter fire on October 7.[47] A police investigation found that at the Nova party "a military helicopter that fired at terrorists apparently also hit some partygoers."[48]

We might never get to know the true number of those killed by Israel, but it is definitely way higher than they would like to admit. If anyone doubts the scale, remember the images of the burned out and deformed cars, twisted metal, and the charred bodies, resembling the "Highway of Death" in Iraq, that everybody probably have seen. How did so many cars get burned out and deformed so badly, is one question. Another related question is: whose bodies did we see? In November 2023, Israel admitted some 200 of the initial 1400 burned bodies they thought were Israelis turned out to be Palestinian terrorists.[49] How did they get mixed up with Israeli bodies? Were they burned together? How many such cases exist?

"Blood Libels" — Lies with Deadly Consequences

> "Baby stories are very emotive. Historically, they're stories that can be used to rationalize a very brutal response."[50]

A blood libel is a false, inflammatory myth claiming a targeted group—historically, Jews—murdered children to use their blood in religious rituals (often linked to Passover). Originating in medieval Europe (e.g., Norwich 1144, Trent 1475), it fueled pogroms, expulsions, and centuries of antisemitic persecution. No evidence has ever supported such claims.

The term is primarily associated with antisemitism, but it's also used more broadly for any accusation that portrays a group as ritualistically cruel (e.g., ancient slanders against early Christians, or modern figurative uses in politics).

Everybody has heard of the 40 beheaded babies story, it was spread so widely. But it was a malicious incitement that functioned exactly like a modern blood libel: a lie about gruesome child-murders to dehumanize an entire population and prime the public for maximal retaliation. And even if these stories were debunked,[51] that news didn't reach too many people, and some still keep repeating these claims. This is exactly how a blood libel works: despite obviously untrue, the lie became a myth believed by a large part of society—either it is about the "baby blood drinking Jews" or the "baby beheading Arabs."

There were other ridiculous claims as well that were so absurd you could immediately tell they were fabricated (nevertheless mainstream media obediently repeated them throughout the world without fact-checking), but more subtle incitements were also spread which are more difficult to discredit.

Let's start with the biggest lie, the most obvious one, which grabbed the biggest attention all over the world; the "40 beheaded babies." First, the number 40 is a giveaway; it is a mythical number in Middle Eastern cultures, found in many references, such as 40-year wandering, 40 martyrs, 40-day mourning, and so on. The news of "40 beheaded babies" came out of Britain, where they combined together two lies from a viral Israeli news broadcast clip.

According to the reporter for Israeli news outlet i24News, Nicole Zedeck, an army commander told her that at least 40 babies had been killed, some of them beheaded. The station added: "Similar reports were repeated in testimonies by spokesmen of ZAKA," an ultra-Orthodox Jewish organization whose members retrieve bodies after terror attacks.[52]

There were several other gruesome baby stories. A rescue organization spokesman, Eli Beer, said at a donors conference in the United States: "I saw little kids were beheaded, we didn't know which head belonged to which kid."[53] He also said that he saw a baby who was put in an oven.[54]

Colonel Golan Vach, a commander of the national rescue unit of the IDF's Home Front Command, claimed that in one house he found the bodies of eight burned babies.[55] He also said: "In Be'eri, I came across a horrible scene, a mother trying to protect her baby shot in the back, and the baby decapitated."[56] In another source, Vach is quoted: "I found some babies with their heads cut, which I personally evacuated, I found butchered women with no hands, soldiers with their heads cut, and found dozens of burned young people."[57]

In an interview with Ishay Coen, a journalist for the ultra-Orthodox website *Kikar Hashabbat*, Lt. Col. Yaron Buskila of the IDF's Gaza Division, said that he saw babies who had been hung on clotheslines.[58]

Another main source of the "beheaded babies" rumor is Yossi Landau, the head of operations for the southern region of ZAKA, Israel's volunteer civilian emergency response organization. He told CBS News that he saw the bodies of

beheaded children and babies, parents and children who had been tortured and had their hands bound, and "a lot more that cannot be described."[59] He told *Haaretz* about 20 bound and burned bodies of children, boys and girls between 10 and 15, in Kibbutz Kfar Azza, and that he saw 20 children from Kibbutz Be'eri laid next to each other and burned to death with their hands bound.[60] Landau also claimed to have seen "a pregnant woman, her abdomen ripped open, with the fetus outside her womb tied by the umbilical cord, and the fetus itself stabbed with a knife."[61]

But any claim involving murdered babies is a boldfaced lie with the intent to incite. According to available data, only two babies died on October 7: one of them was 10-month-old Mila Cohen, shot in the safe room with her father and grandmother, and the other was a baby of a Bedouin woman who was shot in the abdomen while heading to the hospital to give birth. Apart from these two infant deaths, partial data by Hebrew sources reveals that deaths include 12 other children under the age of 10, 36 civilians aged 10-19, and 25 elderly people over the age of 80, accounting for 75 of the 764 civilians.[62] "Partial data" suggests there are others still not identified, but surely if there were any other murdered babies found in the kibbutzim, whose inhabitants are known, they would be listed. For example, the residents of Kibbutz Kfar Azza denied the existence of a pregnant woman among their neighbors, and *Haaretz*'s investigation identified all the children in the kibbutzim.[63]

Independent anti-Zionist Israeli media outlet *Mondoweiss* investigated two of the main sources of the "beheaded babies" claims. In their December 2023 article, they traced the i24News story back to Major David Ben Zion. According to his X bio, Ben Zion is the Deputy Head of the settler leadership organization, the Samaria Regional Council, and a member of the Board of Directors of the National Fund for Israel, a quasi-governmental agency used to acquire land in Palestine that is then made available exclusively for use by the Israeli state. Ben Zion is also linked to the settlers pogrom attacking Palestinian homes and property in Huwara, Burin, and across the Nablus area.[64]

In another article where they investigate ZAKA, *Mondoweiss* claims it is not a trustworthy source. They have a shady past, a track record of false claims, and are part of the Israeli government's *hasbara* campaign aimed at trying to influence the international public and their leaders. Hasbara is public diplomacy and advocacy—by government and supporters—meant to "explain" and defend Israeli policies abroad; in other words, it's coordinated Zionist propaganda.

ZAKA was founded in the late 1990s by Yehuda Meshi-Zahav, who had previously headed Keshet, an ultra-Orthodox extremist group that attacked forensic pathologists and used explosives against stores selling secular newspapers. He led ZAKA until 2021, when he attempted suicide after allegations emerged accusing him of dozens of cases of rape and sexual assault. From its early years, the organization—labeled a "militia" by Israeli journalist Yigal Sarna—has been the subject of ongoing criticism, investigations, and demands that it be dismantled.

Since October 7, ZAKA has played a major role in Israel's propaganda campaign, spreading misinformation and unclear narratives in connection with Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.

ZAKA also maintains close cooperation with the National Hasbara Headquarters in the Prime Minister's Office. One of the employees in the headquarters explained how the state "worked on cementing the narrative that Hamas equals ISIS and enhancing the state's legitimacy for a very forceful response…ZAKA's men's testimonies have shocked and exposed, in front of the correspondents, the kind of human monsters we are dealing with."

In November 2023, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with members of the organization's teams to discuss their role in Israeli propaganda efforts. During the meeting, Netanyahu listened to the volunteers "about their public diplomacy activity in Israel and the world" and encouraged them to expand those efforts, stressing their importance in legitimizing the war.[65] These were Netanyahu's words to the ZAKA team, documented on the Prime Minister's Office website:

> But we need to buy time, which we also buy by turning to world leaders and to public opinion. You have an important role in influencing public opinion, which also influences leaders. We are in a war; it will continue. The war is not only to take care of the 1,400 people…but also to give us the maneuvering room.[66]

This vile media campaign about mass murder of babies and beheadings was very successful: these claims were repeated by a number of very prominent people and the mass media. Netanyahu called US President Joe Biden on live air to tell him that Hamas terrorists "took dozens of children, tied them up, burned them and executed them." Biden later claimed he had seen photographic evidence of terrorists beheading children. Others who repeated these false claims include Secretary of State Antony Blinken,[67] US Senator Ted Cruz,[68] Speaker Mike Johnson,[69] British PM Rishi Sunak,[70] then opposition leader Keir Starmer,[71] German Chancellor Olaf Scholz,[72] EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen,[73] and most of the major news outlets.

Only very few media sources had some journalistic integrity and said they could not confirm the allegations. One of them was Israeli journalist Oren Ziv, who was also on the tour of Kfar Aza on October 11, and wrote on X: "During the tour we didn't see any evidence of this, and the army spokesperson or commanders also didn't mention any such incidents." He continued: "Soldiers I spoke with in Kfar Aza yesterday didn't mention 'beheaded babies.'"[74] A couple of mainstream media outlets that questioned the claims include Sky News[75] and NBC News.[76] Then *Haaretz* published an article in December 2023 specifically debunking these claims, from Golan Vach to Yossi Landau, comparing data on residents to the claims.[77] Months later, in April 2024, *Le Monde* reported a piece on false claims by Israel, including the beheaded babies.[78] Unfortunately the debunking of these atrocity claims wasn't reported widely, and there are still many people who believe these malicious fabrications.

But there is also a more subtle incitement which is just as dehumanizing and sticky, but much more difficult to discredit: claims of sexual violence and rape. Some of the accusations are based on ZAKA claims which were debunked, as we saw a little earlier. Then *The Ney York Times* and CNN ran big stories which later were treated as facts. But the witnesses proved unreliable,[79] and family members of the key case claimed the paper invented the story[80] and that no rape occurred.[81] In December 2024, Israeli attorney Moran Gaz said concerning the sexual offenses investigation: "Unfortunately, it will be very difficult to prove them. In this matter, I would lower expectations." She also admitted that there is no suitable evidence, according to *Ynet*.[82] *Haaretz* also reported that the "police are having difficulty locating victims of sexual assault or witnesses to acts of Hamas violence, and are unable to connect the existing testimonies to the victims described in them."[83] Israel did not cooperate with the UN, refusing to share data, calling the organization biased;[84] instead it started its own investigation[85] but no findings have been announced as of late 2025.

I do not claim that there were no rapes, as this cannot be ruled out, but the circumstances surrounding these allegations are very muddled. Yet, reference to widespread and systematic rape is used today in almost all pro-Israeli talk about Palestinians and calling them "rapists" is now the norm.

These smear campaigns, and especially the spreading of mythologized lies about Palestinians beheading babies, are, you can confidently say, typical examples of a blood libel with the intention to demonize a people in front of the whole world. The public was programmed into believing that all these terrible things really happened, or at least likely happened or might have happened—even if someone doesn't believe the story fully, people have been conditioned to assume this is typically what Palestinians are and to ignore any brutal retaliation.

9/11 and October 7 Compared

Similarities between the events of 9/11 and October 7 are plentiful wherever you look. There are big differences too, especially the proportions and the religious framing in the latter case. Here is an overview of the key parallels that we will look at in this long chapter.

The first and perhaps most important issue is intelligence failures and foreknowledge. It is now admitted in both cases that information related to the attacks was received, but not acted upon. Another notable similarity is that in both cases the attacks created an opportunity for advancing radical goals, to reorganize the world. An interesting aspect is that the terrorists involved were, to a large extent, propped up by the very powers they later turned against. These are enemies of one's own making.

The drums of war that followed both attacks, and the rhetoric that fueled prejudice and hate, were also similar. However, after October 7, this often reached the level of open incitement and calls for war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. More uniquely, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was often presented in a religious context, and inflammatory rhetoric reached biblical levels.

Both attacks were followed by aggressive propaganda and information operations meant to push the official narrative and shape public perception. In both cases, the security establishment influenced and even planted stories in the media. A modern development is that today you can use AI to spread propaganda.

In both cases, what began as counterterrorism escalated into large-scale wars in multiple theaters and regime-change operations. And in the process, war crimes were committed on a massive scale by both the US and Israel, backed by a sense of impunity and exceptionalism. However, what happened after October 7 in Gaza has reached a level what many scholars and organizations call a genocide.

The human cost is staggering—millions in the War on Terror when indirect deaths are included. In Gaza, final figures are still unknown, but the official death toll of around 70,000 is widely seen as a gross underestimate.

The scale of destruction of infrastructure and housing varied across the War on Terror. Iraq suffered massive harm —Fallujah, Mosul, Ramadi, and more. But Israel's so-called war on Hamas shows a systematic effort to make Gaza uninhabitable. Much of the destruction came from deliberate demolition using planted explosives and bulldozers.

Wars are expensive, fueling inflation and swelling national debt. In Israel's case, the US pays much of the bill, but the indirect effects—port closures, emigration, disrupted trade—also strain Israel's economy. The question many ask is: how long can the US sustain its and its allies' wars?

Initially both the US and Israel enjoyed broad support internationally and at home, but as lies were exposed (such as the WMD claims) and the conduct of the wars became visible, even long-time allies turned away. Israel has alienated some of its strongest supporters, including parts of the American right, and faces setbacks with friendly regional states.

The War on Terror triggered unprecedented security-state expansion and degradation of civil liberties—a process that never truly ended. What followed October 7 was built directly on this foundation: emergency powers, new laws, the conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism, protest bans, more intrusive surveillance using newer technologies, and arrests for peaceful demonstrations or social-media posts. In less than three decades, we reached a point where the West hardly resembles the free world it preaches about.

Foreknowledge — No Longer a "Conspiracy Theory"

When *The New York Times* writes about it, claiming that "Israel knew Hamas's attack plan" before October 7, talking about foreknowledge is no longer a fringe conspiracy theory. Many other reliable sources also confirm that there was at least some prior knowledge—some people knew something, even if they did not act. The case of October 7 bears similarities to the 9/11 attack in the US, as *The New York Times* notes in the same article:

> The failures to connect the dots echoed another analytical failure more than two decades ago, when the American authorities also had multiple indications that the terrorist group Al Qaeda was preparing an assault. The Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were largely a failure of analysis and imagination, a government commission concluded.
>
> "The Israeli intelligence failure on Oct. 7 is sounding more and more like our 9/11," said Ted Singer, a recently retired senior C.I.A. official who worked extensively in the Middle East. "The failure will be a gap in analysis to paint a convincing picture to military and political leadership that Hamas had the intention to launch the attack when it did."[86]

Even without assuming any conspiracy, the events cast a harsh light on the systems meant to protect their societies. It is acknowledged in both cases that warnings existed, signals were detected, and intelligence was available which, in hindsight, pointed clearly to what was coming. The issue is not whether foreknowledge existed, but why it did not translate into action. Certainly, it was a combination of several factors, and the belief that "this kind of things just don't happen." And yet they did.

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A lot of time has passed, and we've learned a great deal since then. There were strategic warnings that were ignored or misread; the US allowed dubious individuals to enter the country, and some of the terrorists were already known, but information wasn't properly shared.

Strategic warnings ignored/misread

Multiple threat streams emerged in 2001, but no national-level defensive posture followed. Next are the main cases in chronological order.

Spring-Summer 2001: "System blinking red"

CIA Director George Tenet repeatedly warned senior officials that intelligence reports were at an unprecedented level. Several independent streams pointed to a major al-Qaeda operation in the works, though details were vague. The warnings described growing chatter, urgent alerts from allies, and signs of operational readiness, yet no major preventive action was taken.[87]

June-July 2001: FAA/CIA threat traffic

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) circulated security bulletins about possible hijackings and terror plots, while CIA cables reported increasing al-Qaeda activity. Some intelligence mentioned US targets. Coordination between agencies was limited, and domestic aviation security remained unchanged.[88]

July 5, 2001: Clarke's stand-up

Counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke gathered key agencies and warned that a major terrorist attack was likely soon. He asked for tighter airport checks, increased readiness, and more inter-agency communication. Despite his urgency, few concrete steps followed outside routine precautions.[89]

July 10, 2001: Urgent CIA briefing

Senior CIA officers briefed the National Security Council staff about alarming intelligence suggesting an imminent al-Qaeda plot. They urged higher-level attention and quick disruption efforts. The warning was noted but produced no immediate operational response.[90]

July 2001: Phoenix Memo (field to HQ)

An FBI agent in Phoenix reported suspicious Middle Eastern men training at US flight schools, possibly tied to bin Laden. The memo urged national investigation, but headquarters filed it away, and no wider inquiry was launched.[91]

Aug 6, 2001: President's Daily Brief

The CIA's daily brief titled "Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in U.S." summarized years of warnings and signs of hijacking interest. It mentioned possible preparations but lacked specific timing. The alert drew little follow-up or defensive action.[92]

Late Aug 2001: Moussaoui arrest (MN)

In Minnesota, flight instructors reported Zacarias Moussaoui's suspicious behavior during simulator training. After his arrest, links to extremist networks and French intelligence warnings emerged. Still, the case stayed local, and no national alert was issued.[93]

Visa-screening issues

A 9/11 Commission staff statement and subsequent Senate testimony noted that many hijacker visa applications were incomplete or inaccurate, interviews were rare, and some approvals were issued despite red flags. A State Department initiative allowed many Saudi applicants to obtain visas via travel agencies without interviews; at least three hijackers used it, according to congressional correspondence at the time.

However, a former consular officer who served in Saudi Arabia in the late 1980s claimed that granting visas to many of these potential terrorist types wasn't by mistake but by design. In his book, *Visas for Al-Qaeda*, Michael Springmann described a consulate teeming with CIA personnel, and reveals how, as head of the American visa bureau, he was ordered not to follow his best instincts but instead to approve visas for all manner of dubious individuals. In retrospect, he realized he was witnessing the mujahideen pipeline—the flow of young fighters to take on the Soviets—the same people who later became al-Qaeda.[94]

Watchlisting and notification failures

Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi were two of the 19 future hijackers involved in the September 11 attack. The CIA learned during a high-level meeting in Kuala Lumpur in January 2000 that Mihdhar held a valid US visa and that both men were linked to al-Qaeda; yet the agency did not promptly alert the FBI or place their names on any watchlist, allowing both to enter the country freely in January 2000.[95]

One of the surveillance initiatives active in late 1999 and 2000 was "Able Danger," a classified Defense Intelligence Agency and US Special Operations Command data-mining project designed to map global al-Qaeda networks using extensive public, commercial, and proprietary datasets. Several officers later said the team had produced detailed link charts of suspected terrorist cells and attempted—unsuccessfully—to share leads with the FBI before 9/11.

A 2005 Senate Judiciary hearing took testimony on the program and on obstacles to sharing its output with domestic investigators. Officers including Lt. Col. Anthony Shaffer and Capt. Scott Phillpott claimed the unit had identified Atta and three other future hijackers in 2000 as part of a Brooklyn-based cluster. The 9/11 Commission found no documentary evidence to support the claims; however, critics note that much of the data had been destroyed under data-retention rules (as admitted in the Senate Judiciary hearing[96]), making independent verification impossible.

Inter-agency legal/structural barriers ("The Wall")

Several witnesses said that Department of Defense lawyers had blocked the Able Danger team from sharing specific names and leads with the FBI, citing legal concerns over the handling of US-person data. This restriction became a prime example of the pre-9/11 information-sharing barriers that hampered coordination between intelligence and law-enforcement agencies.

Large batches of Able Danger's data were reportedly purged to comply with privacy and data-retention rules, leaving scant records for after-action review. This fueled later disputes about what the unit had actually discovered and how significant its findings might have been.[97]

A 2005 MSNBC investigation also reported that Able Danger had obtained information identifying Mohamed Atta, adding that this material was also destroyed during the data purges:

> A Pentagon employee was ordered to destroy documents that identified Mohamed Atta as a terrorist two years before the 2001 attacks, a congressman said Thursday.
>
> The employee is prepared to testify next week before the Senate Judiciary Committee and was expected to identify the person who ordered him to destroy the large volume of documents, said Rep. Curt Weldon, R-Pa.
>
> Certain data had to be destroyed in accordance with existing regulations regarding "intelligence data on U.S. persons."
>
> Atta, the mastermind of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and three other hijackers were identified in 1999 by a classified military intelligence unit known as "Able Danger," which determined they could be members of an al-Qaida cell.

The MSNBC article has since been deleted, but it is available in archived form.[98]

Failure of imagination

"Nobody in our government […] could envision flying airplanes into buildings on such a massive scale," claimed President Bush at a news conference,[99] but he wasn't right: some did envision very similar scenarios but they weren't taken seriously. Another now deleted (but archived) article, written in *USA Today* in 2004, claimed the following:

> In the two years before the Sept. 11 attacks, the North American Aerospace Defense Command conducted exercises simulating what the White House says was unimaginable at the time: hijacked airliners used as weapons to crash into targets and cause mass casualties.
>
> One of the imagined targets was the World Trade Center. In another exercise, jets performed a mock shootdown over the Atlantic Ocean of a jet supposedly laden with chemical poisons headed toward a target in the United States. In a third scenario, the target was the Pentagon.
>
> NORAD, in a written statement, confirmed that such hijacking exercises occurred.
>
> "Numerous types of civilian and military aircraft were used as mock hijacked aircraft," the statement said. "These exercises tested track detection and identification; scramble and interception; hijack procedures; internal and external agency coordination and operational security and communications security procedures."
>
> The exercises differed from the Sept. 11 attacks in one important respect: The planes in the simulation were coming from a foreign country.

A watchdog group, the Project on Government Oversight, released a copy of an e-mail written by a former NORAD official referring to the proposed exercise targeting the Pentagon. The e-mail said the drill was not run because the Pentagon considered it "too unrealistic."[100]

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The first report suggesting there were warning signs was published the day after the attack, on October 8, in *The Times of Israel*. It said that a reporter for the Kan public broadcaster, Assaf Pozilov, cautioned just a few days earlier: "The Islamic Jihad organization has started a noisy exercise very close to the border, in which they practiced launching missiles, breaking into Israel and kidnapping soldiers."[101]

The next day on October 9, the same news outlet wrote that an Egyptian intelligence official claimed that Jerusalem had ignored repeated warnings that the Gaza-based group was planning an attack.

According to the Egyptian official, Egypt, which often mediates between Israel and Hamas, had warned repeatedly the Israelis about "something big" planned by Hamas.

> "We have warned them an explosion of the situation is coming, and very soon, and it would be big. But they underestimated such warnings," the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the content of sensitive intelligence discussions with the media, told The Associated Press.[102]

Michael McCaul, the Republican head of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, reinforced claims that Cairo had warned Israel of looming major attack by Hamas, three days before it happened.

> "We know that Egypt… warned the Israelis three days prior that an event like this could happen." he added: "I don't want to get too much into classified [details], but a warning was given."
>
> "I think the question was at what level."

The Egyptian official also confirmed to *The Times of Israel* that its intelligence service warned Israeli counterparts ahead of the surprise attack. The Egyptian official stated that, in his

view, the warning was not passed through the Israeli chain of command and never reached the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.[103]

Then on November 2024, *Haaretz* wrote that "over a year before October 7, Israel's army had insight into Hamas' plan to attack Israeli towns, IDF bases."[104] *The New York Times* article mentioned at the beginning of this section was published about a week later, offering a detailed description of the events. Following is a summary of its main points and findings.

Israeli authorities obtained a roughly 40-page Hamas operations blueprint—code-named "Jericho Wall"—more than a year before October 7, according to documents, emails, and interviews. Yet within the defense establishment it was dismissed as "aspirational": a maximalist scenario judged too complex for Hamas to execute. The plan did not specify a date, but it laid out, in step-by-step detail, the kind of assault that ultimately left about 1,200 people dead.

The document sketched a choreography of shock: an opening rocket barrage to saturate defenses, drones to blind cameras and automated guns along the barrier, and mass infiltration by gunmen on foot, motorcycles, and paragliders —followed by rapid thrusts into nearby towns and assaults on key IDF installations, including a divisional headquarter. On October 7, Hamas followed that script with startling fidelity. The blueprint also listed the disposition of Israeli forces, communications nodes, and other sensitive targets, prompting lingering questions about how Hamas assembled such granular intelligence and whether leaks or compromised systems played a role.

Jericho Wall circulated widely among military and intelligence leaders. Analysts acknowledged it as a comprehensive concept of operations, but prevailing assessments still concluded that Hamas lacked the scale, coordination, and discipline to pull it off. It remains unclear whether Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or other top political figures ever reviewed the plan directly. The mindset persisted that Hamas's leadership—especially Yahya Sinwar

—was interested in tactical pressure, not in launching a war that could risk Gaza's survival.

In July 2023, however, a veteran analyst from Unit 8200 sounded a sharper alarm. She reported that Hamas had just completed an intensive, day-long training exercise that mapped closely to the blueprint: simulated takedowns of aircraft, the storming of a kibbutz, seizure of a military training base, and the killing of cadets. Participants even invoked the same Quranic phrase that appeared atop the plan. "I utterly refute that the scenario is imaginary," she wrote to colleagues. "This is a plan designed to start a war. It's not just a raid on a village."

Her warning met institutional inertia. A Gaza Division colonel praised her thoroughness but dismissed the drill as performative, a rehearsal for a fantasy Hamas couldn't realize. The division had already produced its own assessment labeling the Jericho Wall concept a "compass"—an indication of direction rather than current capability. The implication was that Hamas knew where it wanted to go, but hadn't yet reached the threshold. "In short, let's wait patiently," the colonel replied. The analyst countered with a historical caution: on the southern front, Israel had once deemed an "imaginary" scenario improbable—until it wasn't.

In private, officials would later concede the obvious corollary: had the warnings been acted upon, and substantial reinforcements shifted southward in time, the onslaught might have been blunted, perhaps even prevented. The Jericho Wall plan was not a lone outlier, either. Over the years, Israeli agencies had collected multiple iterations of Hamas offensive concepts. A 2016 Defense Ministry memo, for example, assessed that Hamas intended to carry the next round of fighting inside Israeli territory, likely involving the capture of hostages and the occupation of one or more communities. Jericho Wall simply spelled it out more explicitly, marrying deception, rockets, drones, breaching, and rapid exploitation.

The document's theological framing also resonated. It opened with a Quranic injunction—"Surprise them through the gate; if you do, you will certainly prevail"—a line Hamas

later echoed across videos and statements after October 7. Tactically, the plan envisioned breaches at some 60 points along the barrier, synchronized to overwhelm response cycles and draw Israeli troops into shelters and confusion. Among its priority objectives was the overrun of the Re'im base, home to the Gaza Division responsible for the sector—along with other installations under its command. On the day of the attack, Hamas achieved those objectives, overrunning portions of Re'im and temporarily collapsing command and control in adjacent areas.

After first obtaining the Jericho Wall document, the Gaza Division produced an internal intelligence assessment that recognized Hamas had "decided to plan a new raid, unprecedented in scope," combining deception with a large maneuver designed to swamp divisional defenses. Yet by labeling the plan a compass rather than a countdown, the assessment subtly reinforced the consensus that capability lagged intent. That framing—intent without imminent ability—proved costly.

The July 6, 2023 email chain from the Unit 8200 analyst described that dozens of Hamas commandos had recently conducted training exercises, with senior Hamas commanders observing. The reuse of the plan's Quranic motto during the exercise underscored that this was not generic training but a rehearsal against a specific concept. The analysis was welcomed but the response downplayed the significance, claiming the training was part of a "totally imaginative" scenario and that Hamas wouldn't be able to pull it off. "In short, let's wait patiently," *The New York Times* article quotes a colonel.[105]

The Jerusalem Post also reported that the IDF had precise information about Hamas's intentions, but due to prevailing conceptions in the security establishment and possible negligence by officials, the warning signs were not acted on. Their article, based on a Kan News report, provides some additional info—here is the summary of the relevant parts.

A newly revealed document indicates that the IDF and Israeli intelligence had detailed advance notice of Hamas's

plan to raid Israel and abduct roughly 250 people weeks before the October 7 attack. The document was prepared by the Gaza Division and known to senior intelligence officials.

Titled "Detailed End-to-End Raid Training," the document was circulated on September 19, 2023. It described precisely a sequence of drills by Hamas elite units: assaults on military outposts and kibbutzim, the kidnapping of soldiers and civilians, and procedures for holding hostages once transferred into Gaza.

Kan News quoted security sources saying the document was at minimum on the radar of Gaza Division intelligence leadership. Despite possessing precise indicators of Hamas's intentions, the security establishment—shaped by entrenched assumptions and, potentially, senior-level negligence—failed to act on the warning signs.

According to the report, Israeli intelligence officers observed and documented the exercise, mapping the anticipated steps after breaching Israeli territory and seizing IDF positions. The document projected a hostage count of 200-250, which turns out to be a very precise prediction of the number of hostages taken on October 7.

In sum, the document captured the who, what, and how of Hamas's intended raid—targets, abduction plans, and post-attack handling—yet the indications did not translate into preventive measures. The Kan News account portrays a system that recognized a credible scenario but discounted its feasibility, allowing a meticulously rehearsed plan to unfold largely as scripted on October 7.[106]

"Was There a Stand-Down Order?"

The slow response raised suspicions in the first place, and with foreknowledge now admitted, it is natural that people speculate. Former US military officers, Lt. Gen. Michael T. Flynn and Col. Douglas Macgregor, believe that soldiers "were told to stand down" and that October 7 "was allowed to happen."[107] Charlie Kirk, now well known even beyond the MAGA world, also raised the question just days after the October 7 attack: "Was there a stand-down order?"

Only a couple of days after the attack, Kirk went on his podcast, *The Charlie Kirk Show*, and said the following:

> "But I've got to be very honest with you here, I want to make sure we ask the right questions. Israel is by far the most alert country in the world... It is a country built as a fortress. Maybe the Israeli government was double-crossed, maybe they had intelligence about this. We don't know."
>
> "Usually there's helicopters flying all over the place ... But you're trying to tell me that the CIA, Mossad, Israeli intelligence, everybody missed this? Israel cares about its border deeply. They work hard to secure it. They have billions of dollars of technology built completely and totally on border security. How did this happen?"[108]

A few days later, during an October 12 appearance on the *Patrick Bet David Podcast*, Kirk questioned how Israel's vaunted security failed so catastrophically and had a few critical words about Netanyahu:

> "I still have the same gut instinct that I did initially. I find this very hard to believe.
>
> "I've been to that Gaza border. You cannot go ten feet without running into a 19-year-old with an AR-15 or an automatic machine gun that is an IDF soldier. The whole country is surveilled. Let me just go through this. We don't talk about Israeli politics very often and most Americans don't know this. In the last nine months, Israel was on the brink of civil war, it's not an exaggeration. This judicial stuff, there were hundreds of thousands of Israelis taking to the streets because Bibi Netanyahu was basically redefining the Israeli constitution. That's not an exaggeration, he said the judicial branch has too much power. There were protests planned this week against Netanyahu where they anticipated tens of thousands of people to take to the streets, that's all

> gone. Netanyahu now has an emergency government and a mandate to lead.
>
> "I'm not willing to go so far to say Netanyahu knew, or there was intelligence here, but I think some questions need to be asked. Was there a stand-down order? Was there a stand-down order?
>
> "Six hours? I don't believe it. Israel is the size of New Jersey, when I took a helicopter ride from Jerusalem to the Gaza border, it was 45 minutes. For six hours, they're live-streaming the killing of Jews. Did somebody in the government say stand down? That is a legitimate non-conspiracy question."

Kirk also believed, or at least his first "gut reaction" was, that the real aim of the war was ethnic cleansing Gaza.

> "I've got to be careful the way I say this, they're going to try to ethnically cleanse Gaza. And I don't use that term lightly, okay? They're talking about basically removing 2.5 million people from there."[109]

Whatever you think about Charlie Kirk, the things he said resonate with many people.

IDF soldier claims there *was* a stand-down order

Shalom Shitrit, an IDF soldier who was on duty on October 7, has testified before the Knesset, describing a "strange message" issued by senior military leadership that morning. According to the report on the hearing, Shitrit said during his testimony that at 5.20am on October 7:

> We were playing on the phone and suddenly a strange message came up from my deputy commander, .. and what he says on the radio is something like this: 'I don't know why, but an order was given that there would be no patrols in the (Gaza) fence until 9am.

And then, an hour later, at 6.30 AM, suddenly the sirens went off and the Hamas attack began. Shitrit lost several friends and his right leg in the events.

According to Shitrit, someone from a place of high command decided that border IDF soldiers would not patrol the morning of October 7. He described how unprecedented this was, and that the explanation he later received—that it was due to Hamas sniper activity—did not make sense. It still scares him to think about what happened there, Shitrit told to a reporter on an Israeli TV channel.[110]

It should be noted that this account reflects personal testimony and does not, by itself, establish deliberate wrongdoing or intent.

Both Attacks Were Good for Advancing Radical Goals

In retrospect, it is clear that in both cases the attacks served the interests of radicals within their respective governments. In the United States, the neoconservatives who rose to prominence under George W. Bush had long sought a war against Iraq, which aligned with the interests of their allies in Israel—years before 9/11 provided the pretext. In Israel, hard-line Zionists have always wanted the expulsion of Palestinians—labeled "transfer"—in order to seize their land; the idea goes back to the time the Zionist project began.[111] In both instances, the attacks created a political opening to pursue these old goals. These circumstances inevitably fuel speculation, but my point is that neocon and Zionist actors viewed both events as an opportunity.

The overlapping history and alliance of the neocon and Zionist movements will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, "A Shared Vision."

9/11

There is a famous quote from a September 2000 neocon paper, *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*. In the section "Creating Tomorrow's Dominant Force" that envisioned a bright future where the US dominates the whole world, a passage states:

> Further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor.[112]

Many interpret it as a terror attack of a 9/11 type was "hoped for" to achieve the neocon goals. What it definitely proves is that the 9/11 attack was an opportunity, and many saw it that way—even at the highest US level.

Then-President George W. Bush, on September 19, 2001, proclaimed, "Through my tears, I see opportunity." Some months later, Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, explained, "[T]his is a period not just of grave danger, but of enormous opportunity. Before the clay is dry again, America and our friends and our allies must move decisively to take advantage of these new opportunities."[113]

The attack on US was also good for Israel, according to Benjamin Netanyahu and others. *The New York Times* published an article on September 12, 2001, which revealed that Netanyahu seemed even happy for the political opportunity, right in the evening of 9/11.

> Asked tonight what the attack meant for relations between the United States and Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, the former prime minister, replied, "It's very good." Then he edited himself: "Well, not very good, but it will generate immediate sympathy." He predicted that the attack would "strengthen the bond between our two peoples, because we've experienced terror over so many decades, but the United States has now experienced a massive hemorrhaging of terror."

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, although more diplomatic, had a similar opinion and called for a united front against terrorism. He called the assault an attack on "our common values" and declared "I believe together we can defeat these forces of evil."[114]

Netanyahu later, in 2008, talking to an audience at Bar-Ilan University, repeated that the September 11 terror attack "had been beneficial for Israel."[115]

The interconnected interests of the neocon-Zionist alliance were confirmed in the April 2002 *Letter to President Bush on Israel, Arafat and the War on Terrorism*, in which the neocon elite commended Bush for his "strong stance in support of the Israeli government as it engages in the present campaign to fight terrorism." Israel's fights and US fights were tied together, as quotes from the letter confirm.

"No one should doubt that the United States and Israel share a common enemy… Israel is fighting the same war."

"the United States should lend its full support to Israel as it seeks to root out the terrorist network that daily threatens the lives of Israeli citizens."

"Israel's fight against terrorism is our fight. Israel's victory is an important part of our victory."[116]

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The word "opportunity" was not often used explicitly in Israeli public talk, but it is clear that many saw it as such to carry out their long-hoped for ethnic cleansing of all Palestinians. Some admitted it more openly, others more subtly, but this intention gained new momentum.

One of those voices who said it out clearly is the Misgav Institute for National Security & Zionist Strategy, an Israeli think tank. It published a paper a couple of weeks after the October 7 attack stating that thanks to it, "There is currently a unique and rare opportunity to evacuate the entire Gaza Strip." The paper continued, "There is no doubt that in order for this plan to be enacted, many conditions need to exist in parallel. At the moment, these conditions exist, and it is unclear when such an opportunity will arise again, if at all."[117]

Itamar Ben-Gvir, leader of the far-right Otzma Yehudit ("Jewish Power") party, a member of the governing coalition, also said there was an "opportunity."

> The war presents an "opportunity to concentrate on encouraging the migration of the residents of Gaza," Ben Gvir told reporters and members of his far-right Otzma Yehudit party, calling such a policy "a correct, just, moral and humane solution."[118]

Pro-Israel commentators have also argued that October 7 inadvertently had a positive effect, as it unified and mobilized Israeli communities. Opinion pieces noted that the attack galvanized civic volunteering, military mobilization, and diaspora engagement.

According to Aryeh Deri, the chair of the Netanyahu ally Shas party, the attack, in a way, was good for Israel. He said on TV that October 7 "saved the nation of Israel." He framed it as a terrible blow that nonetheless "saved" Israel by revealing Iran's designs and prompting decisive action against Iran with the help of the US.

> "For a truly small moment, on October 7, God forsook us. We took an awful blow, that until now we haven't recovered from. So many casualties, we still have hostages there — but it saved the nation of Israel."
>
> "God performed one more big miracle: that Trump was elected," he continues. "Without October 7, without Trump, and without Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — we wouldn't have been able to do it," he says, referring to the ongoing campaign against Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs.[119]

For Netanyahu, although he didn't specifically say it, it was the opportunity to fulfill a very old dream—going back at least as far as 1989. That year, he lamented that Israel missed the opportunity presented by global attention on China's repression of pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square "to carry out mass expulsions among the Arabs of the (occupied) territories."[120]

An Enemy of One's Own Making — "What We Sow, We Will Harvest"

A very important similarity between 9/11 and October 7 is that in both cases the terrorists who attacked were propped up by those against whom they turned.

BEFORE 9/11

It is always vehemently denied that al-Qaeda was created by the CIA, but even if not directly, this is exactly what happened. The name al-Qaeda literally means "the base," but it was meant as "the database," referring originally to the computer file of the thousands of mujahideen who were recruited and trained with the help of the CIA to defeat the Soviets.[121] A report by *The New York Times* indicates CIA money inadvertently reached al-Qaeda via a convoluted channel.[122] Another admission comes from Hillary Clinton, who said at a House Appropriations Committee hearing in 2009: "Let's remember here, the people we are fighting today, we funded 20 years ago." She continued:

> It was President Reagan in partnership with the Congress led by Democrats who said, you know what? Sounds like a pretty good idea. Let's deal with the ISI and the Pakistani military and let's go recruit these Mujahideen. And that's great.
>
> Let's get some to come from Saudi Arabia and other places importing their Wahhabi brand of Islam so that we can go beat the Soviet Union. And guess what? They retreated. They lost billions of dollars and it led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. So there is a very strong argument which is it wasn't a bad investment to end the Soviet Union, but let's be careful what we sow because we will harvest.[123]

But the story goes back to Jimmy Carter's presidency.

The "investment" Hillary Clinton refers to was the brainchild of Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's national security adviser. The Carter administration's public outrage at the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was deceitful; the US had in fact been aiding the mujahideen for at least the previous six months, with precisely the hope of provoking a Soviet response. Former CIA director Robert Gates later admitted in his memoirs that aid to the rebels began in June 1979.[124] In a 1998 interview, Brzezinski also confirmed that US aid to the rebels began before the Soviet (also referred to as Russian) invasion:

> According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the mujahideen began during 1980, that is to say, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan [in] December 1979. But the reality, secretly guarded until now, is completely otherwise: indeed, it was July 3, 1979, that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention.... We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would....
>
> That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap.... The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War.[125]

A *Socialist Worker* article looked at US involvement in creating jihadist terrorists, which is summarized next.

The Carter administration understood from the outset that supporting the mujahideen meant empowering forces with deeply reactionary social agendas. Yet this reality was ultimately subordinated to Washington's broader geopolitical goals. When Soviet troops entered Afghanistan in December

1979, the invasion became the catalyst for a dramatic escalation in US involvement in what became known as Operation Cyclone. In February 1980, *The Washington Post* already reported that the mujahideen were receiving weapons supplied by the US government.[126] Determined to inflict maximum damage on Moscow, Washington deliberately channeled its strongest backing to the most hard-line factions. A disproportionate share of American arms went to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a notoriously uncompromising fundamentalist whose faction was widely regarded as the most extreme of the Afghan resistance groups.

With the cooperation of Pakistan's military ruler, General Zia-ul-Haq, the United States helped build an extensive pipeline of fighters. From within the roughly three million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, young men were recruited, trained, and prepared for battle. At the same time, large numbers of foreign volunteers and mercenaries from across the Islamic world were drawn into the conflict. The CIA emerged as the central coordinator of this vast effort. A "ceaseless stream" of agency personnel, as well as Pentagon officials, traveled to the headquarters of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Rawalpindi, where they assisted in planning and directing mujahideen operations. The scale of support expanded steadily, and between 1986 and 1989 the rebels received more than a thousand state-of-the-art Stinger shoulder-fired antiaircraft missiles—widely described at the time as a genuine game changer on the battlefield.

Alongside the training of Afghan nationals, the CIA permitted its ISI partners to broaden recruitment by bringing in Muslim extremists from far beyond the region. Among the earliest and most notable of these foreign volunteers was Osama bin Laden. Emerging from a wealthy Saudi family, bin Laden quickly became one of the conflict's most influential figures. He recruited as many as 4,000 volunteers from Saudi Arabia and forged close ties with some of the most radical mujahideen commanders. He also worked in close alignment with the CIA's efforts, raising substantial sums from private Saudi donors. By 1984, bin Laden was running Maktab al-Khidamat, an organization established

with ISI support to channel "money, arms, and fighters" from around the world into the Afghan war.

Since the September 11 attack, senior CIA officials have repeatedly insisted that the agency had no direct links to bin Laden. These assurances, however, have long been met with skepticism. In 2014, testimony at the trial of individuals accused of carrying out the 1998 US embassy bombing in Kenya revealed that the CIA had shipped high-powered sniper rifles to operatives associated with bin Laden in 1989. Even the Tennessee-based manufacturer of the weapons confirmed the delivery. According to *The Boston Globe*, military analysts and arms-trade specialists say the CIA has spent years obscuring its early involvement with Afghan militants. Regardless of official denials, these experts argue that the guerrilla training, extensive funding, and enormous supply of weapons provided by the CIA in the 1980s inevitably strengthened bin Laden and the networks that later turned against the United States.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1988, Washington remained aware of the Taliban's harsh, reactionary program. Yet US officials continued to view the movement as a useful force capable of bringing stability to a war-torn region. As Asia specialist Selig Harrison has observed, the Taliban's rise was "actively encouraged by the ISI and the CIA," with the United States urging both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to help consolidate the group's power. Tacit American support persisted until 1998, when Washington held bin Laden responsible for the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and responded with cruise missile strikes against his alleged training camps in Afghanistan.[127]

As far back as the late 1980s, there were people who already understood the dangerous potential of Islamic extremism, and they already saw the coming storm. Pakistan's then-prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, reportedly warned President George H. W. Bush, "You are creating a Frankenstein."[128]

BEFORE OCTOBER 7

Israel's experience echoes that of the US, which, during the Cold War, looked to Islamists as a useful ally against communism, but here their aim was to divide Palestinians and continue to rule over them.

Hamas

It is fairly well known by now that Hamas was supported by Netanyahu, but the story goes back to other earlier Israeli governments. The aim was, at the beginning, to weaken the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and later the Palestinian Authority, and also because Hamas' more radical stance was seen as an obstacle to a two-state solution. So in reality, while Israel was demonizing Hamas, at the same time it was supporting it.

The precursor of Hamas, al-Mujamma al-Islami, was founded in 1973 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the movement's spiritual leader, as an Islamic Association. Hamas was created in December 1987 at the start of the First Intifada, drawing on Yassin's Mujamma networks. Its first charter was issued in 1988 and it declared Hamas "the intifada wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine."

According to several US intelligence officials, Israel started providing direct and indirect support to the group from the beginning in the late 1970s. According to the officials, funds for the movement came from the oil-producing Arab states and Israel.

Israel's support for Hamas "was a direct attempt to divide and dilute support for a strong, secular PLO by using a competing religious alternative," a former senior CIA official said.

"The thinking on the part of some of the right-wing Israeli establishment was that Hamas and the others, if they gained control, would refuse to have any part of the peace process and would torpedo any agreements put in place," said another US government official.[129]

Qatar began funneling money to Hamas in 2007, after the group's 2007 Gaza takeover, during the term of Ehud Olmert. Then came Benjamin Netanyahu, who directly facilitated the funds.[130] For years, the various governments led by Netanyahu adopted an approach that divided power between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The idea was to prevent Abbas—or anyone else in the Palestinian Authority's West Bank government—from advancing toward the establishment of a Palestinian state.[131]

Since 2018, Israel has allowed suitcases holding millions in Qatari cash to enter Gaza through its crossings. Based on a report by *The New York Times*, *Business Insider* wrote that Israeli security officials personally escorted Qatari envoys moving cash into Gaza; Israel even lobbied Washington not to sanction Qatar over these transfers.[132]

According to various reports, Netanyahu, at a Likud meeting in 2019, was quoted as saying that those who oppose a Palestinian state should support the transfer of funds to Gaza, because maintaining the separation between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza would prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.[133]

"Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas," Netanyahu reportedly said. "This is part of our strategy — to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank."[134]

But it was a blowback, it seems: Israel's security agency, Shin Bet, claims now that "Netanyahu's funding for Hamas via Qatar enabled the October 7 invasion."[135]

Did the US know about it? Some parts of the government must have known, and may even have been involved. According to an AP report, the FBI sent Hamas money in the late 1990s. While President Clinton was trying to broker peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the FBI was secretly funneling money to suspected Hamas figures. The counterterrorism operation in 1998 and 1999 was run out of the FBI's Phoenix office in cooperation with Israeli intelligence and was approved by Attorney General Janet Reno, FBI officials told the Associated Press.[136]

Hezbollah

Hezbollah, Israel's other arch enemy, emerged in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Former Israeli PM Ehud Barak admitted famously:

> When we entered Lebanon, there was no Hizballah. We were accepted by perfumed rice and flowers by the Shi'a in the south. It was our presence there that created Hizballah.[137]

The story goes back to the 1970s when Palestinian militants were chased from Jordan during what became known as "Black September." They had implanted themselves in southern Lebanon, from which they launched attacks on northern Israel, in turn provoking Israeli retaliatory strikes. Caught in the middle, the local Shia population at this point resented the Palestinian guerrillas.

After Israeli troops moved into the area full time in 1978, and treated the Shia very much the same way as they did the Palestinians, the Shia became fearsome foes of both Israel and the United States. The alienation of the Shia had yet another unintended consequence: it allowed Iran to gain influence in the region.

Hezbollah, meaning the "Party of God," was founded with Iran's assistance in 1982 and modeled on Iran's Islamic revolution. Bound by their shared Shia faith within Islam, Hezbollah was directly aided by Iran's Revolutionary Guards. The Iranians received logistical help from Syria, thereby drawing Damascus and Tehran closer together into a common strategy in the Middle East.

Revolutionary Guards fighters were sent to Lebanon to carry Iran's revolution to Lebanon's underclass Shia community and to rid Lebanon of what Iran called 150 years of American influence. By 1983, Hezbollah's influence had spread to Beirut, where it carried out a series of deadly attacks against US facilities, including the embassy annex and a Marine barracks, resulting in the loss of 241 lives, as well as a series of kidnappings of Western nationals.

Hezbollah was formally articulated in its 1985 "Open Letter," in which they stated the "first root of vice is America," and "Israel is the American spearhead in the Islamic world and must be wiped out."[138] Consistently, Hezbollah only attacked Israeli and US/allied targets, and almost all of them in the Middle East (exceptions: Argentina and Bulgaria). It became a major political-military actor in Lebanon after 2000, following the Israeli withdrawal. It was a vital force against jihadists in Syria, protecting Christian, Druze, and other minority communities.[139]

ISIS linked criminal gangs in the Gaza conflict

It's either that Netanyahu never learns, or that he believes supporting hostile terrorist groups is beneficial for his goals —it's hard to tell. Recently, in the chaos of the Gaza war, he started supporting ISIS-linked criminals against Hamas, as revealed by MK Avigdor Lieberman in June 2025. "What's wrong with that?" responded Netanyahu, and condemned Lieberman for revealing a state secret.[140] The leader of the ISIS-linked militia is Yasser Abu Shabab, whose gang was responsible for looting food aid, not Hamas. It was confirmed in the Hebrew media in May: "An interesting statistic that emerged was the number of looting incidents in the Gaza Strip: 110—none of which were carried out by Hamas."[141] Another Israeli publication reported, citing the IDF: there is "a new phenomenon in the Gaza Strip: the establishment of armed militias that, among other things, loot trucks. One of them is the Abu Shabab militia."[142] The Abu Shabab family in the Gaza Strip has declared its complete disavowal of Yasser Abu Shabab, considering him a heretic departing from its national and moral path.[143] (Yasser Abu Shabab was killed on December 4, 2025.[144])

The Israeli opposition called it a complete madness: "After Netanyahu finished handing over millions of dollars to Hamas, he moved on to supplying weapons to groups in Gaza affiliated with ISIS – all improvised, with no strategic planning, and all leading to more disasters," opposition leader Yair Lapid said on social media.[145]

The Drums of War, Hateful Rhetoric, and Incitement

Both attacks rallied the public around the flag, and politicians as well as media outlets across the political spectrum quickly lined up behind calls for war. After 9/11, as well as after October 7, rhetoric that cast entire communities as suspect or subhuman shifted from the fringe to the mainstream.

AFTER 9/11

Next are a few random headlines and quotes from the media before the US and allies attacked Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, as an example of the prevailing mood regarding war.

"A heart-rending but necessary war"

This was the title of the article published in *The Economist* on November 1, 2001, in which they urged "to send in a massive ground force."[146]

"A Merciful War"

"Our invasion of Afghanistan may end up saving one million lives over the next decade," wrote *The New York Times* on February 1, 2002.[147]

"Just 45 minutes from attack"

"Saddam Hussein's armoury of chemical weapons is on standby for use within 45 minutes, Tony Blair's dossier revealed today," said the British tabloid, *The Daily Mail*.[148]

"An Iraq War Won't Destabilize the Mideast"

It was an opinion published in *The New York Times* on November 26, 2002.[149]

After 9/11, public talk in the US slid from condemning al-Qaeda to stigmatizing broad categories: "Arabs," "Muslims," "Middle Easterners." "Go back" slurs, mosque vandalism, and assaults rose alongside calls to surveil mosques, register non-citizen men from predominantly Muslim countries, and profile travelers. Politicians and the media reinforced these views.

President George W. Bush, answering question on the South Lawn of the White House on September 16, called America's mission a "crusade,"[150] which suggested a Christian holy war against Muslims. A few days later, in an address to a joint session of Congress, he famously said, "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."[151]

Former US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger commented on CNN, "There is only one way to begin to deal with people like this, and that is you have to kill some of them even if they are not immediately directly involved in this thing." US-based Australian journalist Steve Dunleavy wrote in the *New York Post*: "The response to this unimaginable 21st- century Pearl Harbour should be as simple as it is swift —kill the bastards. A gunshot between the eyes, blow them to smithereens, poison them if you have to. As for cities or countries that host these worms, bomb them into basketball courts."[152]

Journalist and conservative political commentator John Podhoretz, also in the *New York Post*, claimed that there was a "Fifth Column" (collaborators) "burrowed inside Arab and Muslim communities in American neighborhoods."[153]

One of the most controversial remarks was made by Ann Coulter, another conservative media pundit and author. "We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity," she wrote in her column in the *National Review Online*.[154]

Several evangelical Christian leaders had also attacked Islam with vigor. In an interview on the CBS program *60 Minutes*, the Rev. Jerry Falwell insulted the Prophet Muhammad as did influential television evangelist, Pat Robertson.[155]

AFTER OCTOBER 7

In an echo of the US after 9/11, the Israel Defense Forces posted on X: "You either stand with Israel or you stand with terrorism."[156] But Israeli leaders and media embraced a harsher and more honest war propaganda, not trying to conceal their goals, often using language that amounts to explicit incitement. The general view was that the Palestinians had to be crushed—at any cost.

"The Bible says that 'there is a time for peace and a time for war.' This is a time for war"

Netanyahu told a press conference, quoting Ecclesiastes.[157] He also called for "mighty vengeance" and said the retaliation had "only just begun."[158]

"Now is the time for war — Gaza will never look the same"

Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi said in a statement. "These are human animals," he added.[159]

"Gaza needs to be erased and rebooted"

A headline in *Israel Hayom* read. The IDF and the security establishment will achieve this, the article wrote.[160]

"Use Doomsday weapons against Gaza"

Likud member Revital "Tally" Gotliv, wrote on X. In another post, she said: "Only an explosion that shakes the Middle East will restore this country's dignity, strength and security! Shooting powerful missiles without limit. Not flattening a neighborhood. Crushing and flattening all Gaza without mercy! Without mercy!"[161]

"Even at the cost of endangering the lives of hostages"

At a cabinet meeting, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich urged the Israeli army to "hit Hamas brutally and not take the matter of the captives into significant consideration."[162]

The language used by Zionists to describe Palestinians is genocidal, said Chris McGreal, a British reporter who covered the Rwandan genocide. The language spilling out of Israel after the Hamas attack is eerily familiar, he wrote in *The Guardian*, which is summarized here.

Israel's president, **Isaac Herzog**, blamed every Gazan as he spoke about how far to assign guilt for the worst single atrocity against Jews in his country's history.

"It's an entire nation out there that is responsible. This rhetoric about civilians not aware, not involved, it's absolutely not true. They could've risen up, they could have fought against that evil regime," said Herzog.[163]

When Israel's Defense minister, **Yoav Gallant**, ordered a "complete siege" of the Gaza Strip with "no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed," he said: "We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly."[164]

Likud MK Amit Halevi declared: "There are only two types of Palestinians in Gaza right now. There are Palestinians who support Hamas's Nazi education and Palestinians who serve as human shields for them. We can and must bomb both."[165]

Israel's **Channel 14**, a right-wing commercial television channel, has provided a consistent platform for several commentators and journalists and army personnel to make comments inciting violence. In an interview with Yinon Magal on Channel 14, Eliyahu Yosian from the Misgav Institute for National Security discussed the situation in the Gaza Strip. Asked if Israel should target the population, Yosian stated, "There are no innocents, when you say population, there's no population; there are two and a half million terrorists. Therefore, 'knocking on the roof' [warning civilians to leave] holds no significance. If Gaza contains no innocents, there's no rationale for 'knocking on the roof'." The clip, posted by Channel 14 news, had 1.6 million views as of January 2024. Yosian also said Israel should level the ground in Gaza, kill as many as possible and spare no one, including women: "The woman is an enemy, the baby is an enemy, and the pregnant woman is an enemy."[166]

A prominent **Israeli journalist**, David Mizrahy Verthaim, has called for wholesale bloodletting: "We need a disproportionate response. If all the captives are not returned immediately, turn the strip into a slaughterhouse. If a hair falls from their head - execute security prisoners. Violate any norm, on the way to victory," he wrote on X.

In different ways, the sentiment that the Palestinians are collectively responsible for the actions of Hamas—and therefore deserve what is coming to them—has been echoed beyond Israel's borders. In the US, Senator **Lindsey Graham** called for the total destruction of Gaza.

"We are in a religious war here. I'm with Israel. Do whatever the hell you have to do to defend yourself. Level the place," he told Fox News.[167]

Amalek—Incitements of biblical proportions

A unique aspect of the post-October 7 reaction is its religious framing. After 9/11, expressions like "good versus evil" and "crusade" were used, but the events were not placed in a biblical context. Referring to Amalek after October 7 is one such case of a religious framing, and a very serious at that. Many westerners may not understand it, but in Israel everyone knows that Amalek refers to God's commandments to the Israelites:

> Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys. — 1 Sam. 15:3

On October 28, 2023, during a nationally televised press conference at the Kirya (IDF HQ) in Tel Aviv, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the nation in Hebrew. In the briefing he announced the war's "second stage" and the start of expanded ground operations in Gaza. He also said that all Israelis he met were united in their fight against Hamas, and were "committed to completely eliminating this evil from the world." He then added,

appealing to the people of Israel: "You must remember what Amalek has done to you, says our Holy Bible. And we do remember."[168]

"This will be a victory of good over evil, of light over darkness, of life over death," Netanyahu continued, finishing with an admission: "This is the mission of our lives. This is also the mission of my life."[169]

Netanyahu referred to the same verse again days later, on November 3, in a letter to soldiers and commanders, invoking Amalek while describing the campaign's aims.

> We have always fought bitter enemies who have risen up against us to destroy us. Equipped with strength of spirit and a just cause, we have stood determined against those who seek our lives.
>
> The current fight against the murderers of 'Hamas' is another chapter in the generations-long story of our national resilience.
>
> 'Remember what Amalek did to you.'
>
> We will always remember the horrific scenes of the massacre on Shabbat Simchat Torah, 7 October 2023. We see our murdered brothers and sisters, the wounded, the hostages, and the fallen of the IDF and the security services.
>
> In their name and on their behalf, we have gone to war, the purpose of which is to destroy the brutal and murderous Hamas-ISIS enemy, bring back our hostages and restore the security to our country, our citizens and our children.
>
> This is a war between the children of light and the children of darkness. We will not relent in our mission until the light overcomes the darkness; the good will defeat the extremist evil that threatens us and the entire world.[170]

This was Netanyahu's message to people full of vengeance and armed to the teeth, before they started their revenge mission in Gaza.

Netanyahu wasn't alone referring to Amalek

"There's a phrase that every Jew knows: 'Remember what Amalek did unto thee when ye were come forth out of Egypt'. Remember what Hamas did unto thee and Islamic Jihad. And their fate is annihilation. Period. I regard them as Amalek. They are human animals. They have no right to exist. I'm not arguing about the way it will happen. But they need to be made extinct." These were the words of Yoav Kisch, Minister of Education, appearing on October 10 on *The patriots* on Israel's Channel 14.[171]

"We must not forget that the 'innocent civilians' - the cruel and monstrous ones from Gaza - also took an active part in the pogrom within Israeli communities, in the systematic murder of Jews and the shedding of their blood, in the kidnapping of children, the elderly, and mothers, and in the forcible suffocation and burning of babies alive! It is forbidden to pity the cruel, there is no room for any humanitarian gesture - the memory of Amalek must be erased," Boaz Bismuth, a member of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, commented in regards to a suggested humanitarian ceasefire.[172]

Finance Minister, Bezalel Smotrich, also called for the destruction of Israel's enemies, saying: "There is no half-hearted work. Rafah, Deir al-Balah, Nussirat - complete destruction. 'Blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven' - there is no place under heaven." The minister said this at a Maimonides celebration at the home of Ofakim's Torah rabbi, Shahar Butzhak.[173]

"Our duty to the children I saw… is not to forget for a second what Amalek did, to leave behind the nonsense and the vanities and the arguments, and to wipe this evil from the face of the earth, not an inch less than that," Political commentator Amit Segal wrote on October 24 about his feelings after watching one of the segments of the film that the IDF presented to foreign reporters.[174]

Journalist and politician Yinon Magal has issued several inciting tweets. On December 7, 2023, he posted: "I am coming to conquer Gaza, and to beat Hezbollah's head, I stick to one mitzvah [commandment], demolish the seed of Amalek, I left my house behind, until victory I will not return, you know our slogan, there are no uninvolved."[175]

Multiple clips circulated of troops singing about occupying Gaza and "wiping out the seed of Amalek." A conservative US outlet reviewed the material and affirmed such chants occurred, and prominent observers flagged the same chant as evidence shown in legal proceedings.[176]

Without a doubt, many Palestinians must have died because of the consequences of words like these. The seemingly mindless shootings of domestic animals by IDF soldiers, seen in videos,[177] make more sense in light of this commandment calling to eradicate the Amalekites, even their "cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys." As an IDF soldier admitted to *The Guardian*, "we're killing them, we're killing their wives, their children, their cats, their dogs. We're destroying their houses and pissing on their graves."[178]

The soldiers in the field felt emboldened: they received clear instructions from their leaders for the total destruction of everything, as if it was commanded by God.

What "Amalek" means

Amalek was a biblical tribal confederation in the southern Levant—around the Negev/Sinai—whose people were the Amalekites. The conflict between the Israelites and the Amalekites began in the Book of Exodus after the Israelites left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. At Rephidim, Amalek attacked—targeting the stragglers and the weary—an ambush remembered as striking the most vulnerable (Deut. 25).

Turning to the Book of Samuel, the warring tribes confronted again. God reminded the Israelites to remember what Amalek did and commanded King Saul to place Amalek under *herem*—total destruction—"men and women, infant

and suckling," and even the animals. Saul, however, failed to carry it out fully: he spared Agag, Amalek's king, and kept the best livestock. The prophet Samuel rebuked him and ultimately executed Agag.

The story remains well known in Israel because it is retold each year before Purim on Shabbat Zachor ("Shabbat of Remembering"), when the command to remember Amalek is read. Purim commemorates the courage of Esther and Mordechai at the Persian court of Ahasuerus, who saved the Jewish people from Haman—described in the Megillah as an "Agagite," linked to Amalek. The liturgical pairing underscores that Saul's failure to eradicate Amalek caused a later plot that nearly destroyed the Jews in Haman's time.

Does Amalek still exist? Are Jews still commanded to blot out the memory of Amalek? A number of rabbinic sources express clear discomfort with this commandment, explains prominent Jewish scholar Rabbi Prof. David Golinkin in an article on The Schechter Institutes' website, summarized next.

This discomfort was one of the factors that encouraged allegorical readings of the commandment to destroy Amalek. For example, the *Re'aya Mehemna* section of the Zohar says that Amalek is Samael or Satan, while in Barcelona (ca. 1300) there were commentators who said that Amalek means *Yetzer Hara*, "the evil inclination." In other words, the commandment is directed not against a literal people called Amalek, but against Satan or the inner impulse toward evil.

Many important commentators limit the commandment of blotting out Amalek to very specific times or circumstances. Rabbi Yosef Kara (France, 11th century) explains that Exodus 17:16 which mentions a "hand upon the throne of the Lord" means that we are only commanded to wage war against Amalek "when a King sits on the throne of God – that is the Kingdom of Israel." Rabbi Eliezer of Metz, a pupil of Rabbenu Tam (France, ca. 1200) states in his *Sefer Yere'im* that the commandment to blot out the memory of Amalek "is incumbent on the king and not on the rest of the Jewish people." Rabbi Moshe of Coucy (France, d. 1236)

says in his *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* that "this mitzvah is only practiced in the days of the King Messiah after the conquest of the land." In short, these authorities hold that the commandment applies only to a future king of Israel in the messianic era and neither can nor should be carried out by Jews in their own time.

Several important rabbis eliminated the obligation to destroy Amalek by claiming that, in our day, Amalek no longer exists. Rabbi Abraham, the son of Maimonides (Egypt, ca. 1200) says in his Torah commentary that Amalek was wiped out in the days of King Saul. Rabbi Yosef Babad says in his *Minhat Hinukh* (Lemberg, 1869) that "today we are not commanded to do this 'because Sanheriv already arose and mixed up the world.'; we are not commanded to destroy them because we simply don't know who they are."

Rabbi Avraham Bornstein states in his responsa *Avnei Nezer* (Sochachov, d. 1910) that "now there are no Amaleks in the world." Likewise, Rabbi Hayyim Hirschenson wrote in his responsa *Malki Bakodesh* (Part I, p. 32) in 1919 that the commandment to destroy Amalek no longer exists because they were destroyed by King David and King Hezekiah and then Sanheriv arose and mixed up the nations.

Nonetheless, there were rabbis who ruled that Amalek still exists and that we are still commanded to remember their deed and to destroy them. This was the opinion of Maimonides in his *Sefer Hamitzvot* (Positive Commandments 188-189) and in his *Mishneh Torah* (Laws of Kings 5:4-5). This was also the opinion of Rabbi Pinhass Halevi of Barcelona in his *Sefer Hahinukh* (13 th century). He says "every Jewish male has the obligation to kill them and to destroy them from the world if they have the power to do so, in every place at every time, if perhaps he finds one of their descendants."

Some rabbis tried to identify Amalek with a specific people, such as Christians, Armenians, or Germans. To others, anyone who hates the Jewish people is from the seed of Amalek. There were also rabbis who have identified other Jews as Amalek: the *mumarim le-hakhiss* (those who oppose Jewish law) or the communists. Some Jews in Israel today say that "all the leftists from Meretz [party]" are Amalek.[179]

In a modern context, it is common for Israeli extremists to view Palestinians as today's Amalekites. In 1980, the Rabbi Israel Hess wrote an article that used the story of Amalek to justify wiping out Palestinians. Its title has been translated as "Genocide: A Commandment of the Torah" or "The Mitzvah of Genocide in the Torah."[180]

Invocations of Amalek are a feature of extremist Israeli settler propaganda against Palestinians and Arabs. In a 2004 *New Yorker* article on the Israeli settler movement, the reporter asked Benzi Lieberman, the chairman of the council of settlements, "if he thought the Amalekites existed today." Lieberman responded:

> "The Palestinians are Amalek!" Lieberman went on, "We will destroy them. We won't kill them all. But we will destroy their ability to think as a nation. We will destroy Palestinian nationalism."[181]

After the recent references to Amalek by Netanyahu and others, the usual excuse is that it was meant for Hamas. But Amalek is clearly described as a nation, not an army or party of any kind. "If someone says, 'I just mean the bad members of the Palestinians. I mean Hamas…,' that's not the effect it has in the body politic," Joshua Shanes, a professor of Jewish Studies at the College of Charleston, pointed out. "The effect it has is: 'We have to wipe these people out.'"[182]

What Netanyahu is doing is very dangerous, warns Peter Beinart, an Orthodox Jew who previously edited the *New Republic* and now writes on Substack, explained.

> "The wisdom of rabbinic tradition was to declare that we no longer know who Amalek is because that restrains the genocidal plain meaning of the Biblical text," he wrote in email. "So in claiming that he knows who Amalek is, [Netanyahu] is undoing the moral scaffolding created by Jewish tradition and asserting a Biblical literalism that is alien to the Judaism of the last two thousand years and, given the military power at his disposal, is frankly terrifying."[183]

Other Biblical Incitements

While "Amalek" has been the main motif, other biblical frames have also surfaced in post-October 7 rhetoric. One of them is the Jericho/herem ("ban") imagery (Josh. 6).

The conquest of Jericho is devoting the city "to destruction," and it has been invoked in wartime talk and soldier culture. Videos and reports show references to "making Gaza like Jericho" or citing Joshua-era language about "destroying every living thing," mapping ancient total-destruction vocabulary onto modern Gaza.

One of the most extreme inciters is Rabbi Eliyahu Mali, who claims God commands the Jews to kill everyone in Gaza, including women and small children. His *hesder yeshiva* (yeshiva—college—that combines religious study with army service) is directly subsidized by the Israeli government, and indirectly by the US through tax-deductible donations.[184]

Talking about the war in Gaza at a conference in March 2024, Rabbi Mali first emphasized that according to *halakha* (Jewish religious law), one must also act according to IDF orders. Then he added that this is a holy war and explained the *halakhic* principle: "The law - not a soul shall live. Will you not kill them? They will kill you." When asked about babies, he replied: "The same thing." After the uproar from some segments of the saner part of society, the yeshiva responded: "He emphasized again and again that there is a halakhic obligation to obey the army's orders."

Following are the rabbi's words, reported in *Ynet* and translated from Hebrew:

> He began his remarks by saying, "Since this is a sensitive issue, and I was told that it is being uploaded online, I want to go ahead and say that the bottom line is that we must do exactly what is stated in the IDF orders."
>
> He then began to describe what a war of obligation is, saying that "the basic law in a war of obligation, in this case in Gaza, is - 'Not a soul shall live.' Won't you kill them? They will kill you. Today's

> terrorists are the children of the previous operation that you left alive. The women are actually the ones who create the terrorists."
>
> "It's either you - or them," added Rabbi Mali. "No soul shall live based on 'he who comes to kill you - hurry up and kill him.' Not just about the 14-, 16-year-old boy, the 20-, 30-year-old man who raises a weapon against you - also about the future generation. And also about those who produce the future generation. Because there really is no difference."
>
> He was asked if he was also talking about the elderly, and he replied that it was "a heavy question, there is the Jewish heart, but [...] here is a difference between the civilian population in other places and the civilian population in Gaza. In Gaza, according to estimates, 95 to 98 percent want us to be destroyed."
>
> When asked, "Even babies?", the head of the Hesder yeshiva replied: "The same thing. You can't reason with the Torah. Today he's a baby, tomorrow he's a fighter. There are no questions here. Today's terrorists were 8-year-old children in the previous operation. So you can't be satisfied here. That's why the law of Gaza is different here."[185]

After Rabbi Mali's remarks were reported, Eitay Mack, a lawyer representing the anti-racism organization Tag Meir, demanded that a criminal investigation be opened against the rabbi on suspicion of incitement. However, *Haaretz* has learned, the police have recommended that the case be closed.[186]

Total destruction and annihilation

You can argue that even if it is not a direct biblical quote, referring to an apocalyptic state of total destruction or annihilation could be interpreted as a religious vision: destroying everything, killing everyone, as in biblical times.

There were hundreds of comments by Israeli public figures calling for the total destruction of Gaza and/or the Palestinians. I don't want to dwell into them here; those who are interested can look up the Law for Palestine database,[187] the *Israeli Incitement Reports* by the State of Palestine,[188] or the document by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[189] There is also a good number of cases on the website of political scientist and anti-Zionist activist Norman Flinkeinsten.[190]

Let's finish the section with a final example, with something shockingly bizarre. A song originally titled "Children of the Generation of Victory," performed by a group of Israeli children, went viral on Hebrew social media platforms. Israel's state broadcaster Kan aired the song under the title "We will annihilate everyone in Gaza." Kan was later forced to remove the clip after it sparked angry global responses. The video is still available on pro-Palestinian accounts, such as *The Palestine Chronicle*, where the lyrics is also published in full in English. These are the first few lines of the song:

> Autumn night falls on the coast of Gaza
> Planes bomb, destruction, destruction
> Here the Israeli Army crosses the line
> To eliminate swastika holders
> In another year there will be nothing
> And we will return safely to our homeland
> In a year, we'll eliminate them all
> Then we go back to plowing our fields.

Kan described the song as a "song of friendship," stressing that "its new lyrics express the children of the victorious generation."[191]

Propaganda and Information Ops — Who's Writing the News?

After both terrorist attacks, the security establishment infiltrated Western media to spread propaganda and conduct information ops with the aim of generating support, normalizing the destruction, and discrediting any criticism.

AFTER 9/11

Shortly before the launch of the War on Terror, an unnamed Pentagon war planner seemed to warn journalists everywhere when he told *The Washington Post* reporter Howard Kurtz: "This is the most information-intensive war you can imagine… We're going to lie about things."

In February 2002, *The New York Times* reported that the Pentagon's **Office of Strategic Influence** (OSI) was "developing plans to provide news items, possibly even false ones, to foreign media organizations" in an effort "to influence public sentiment and policy makers in both friendly and unfriendly countries." The story got widespread attention, and the Pentagon announced that the office would be eliminated. But considerably less media attention was paid when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld later said that, while the OSI had been closed, its mission would be taken up by other agencies.[192]

While the OSI was set up to plant false stories in foreign media to influence global opinion, the Pentagon's **Military Analysts Program** (2002-2008) used retired military officers as media surrogates to promote Iraq War narratives at home. The Department of Defense under Secretary Donald Rumsfeld cultivated relationships with over 75 retired military officers who appeared as "independent" experts on major TV networks (e.g., CNN, Fox News, MSNBC). These analysts received scripted briefings, access to classified information, and travel perks in exchange for promoting positive views of the Iraq War and US strategy. Internal

documents called them "message force multipliers" and "surrogates" to generate favorable coverage. This hidden propaganda campaign was exposed by a 2008 *The New York Times* investigation,[193] though a 2011 Pentagon review found no wrongdoing.

In another attempt to influence media during the War on Terror, the CIA and Pentagon contracted the Rendon Group, a Washington PR firm, for more than $100 million in no-bid deals. This included creating the **Iraqi National Congress** (INC) exile group, which fed fabricated intelligence on Saddam Hussein's WMDs to outlets like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, fueling the 2003 invasion pretext. Post-9/11, Rendon profiled journalists, monitored war coverage, and ran "media assessment" ops to counter negative reporting.[194]

The CIA also collaborated with **Hollywood** for positive portrayals. The CIA's Entertainment Liaison Office worked with studios to shape films and TV, providing script consultations and resources to depict the agency heroically and boost recruitment. Examples include co-developing the CBS series *The Agency* (2001-2003) as a "threat-scenario workshop" for anthrax plots and border crises; influencing *Alias* (2001-2006) to glamorize spy work, leading to a 2004 recruitment video starring Jennifer Garner; and funding USC video games for counterterrorism training simulations.[195]

The infiltration of US media actually started before 9/11, but after the terrorist attack it intensified. *The New York Times* wrote in 2005 that federal agencies had been commissioning video news releases since at least the first **Clinton administration**, but under the **Bush administration**, they appeared to be producing more releases, and on a broader array of topics.[196]

A notable case in the **UK**, presented by the investigative outlet *Declassified UK*, shows how the British security services neutralized Britain's premier liberal outlet, *The Guardian*. The MI5, MI6, and GCHQ systematically infiltrated and influenced the paper to curb its critical reporting, especially after the 2013 Edward Snowden leaks. Tactics included threats of legal action, physical destruction of evidence,

advisory notices, and subtle infiltration via personnel placements and exclusives. This transformed *The Guardian* from a whistleblower into a compliant amplifier of official narratives.[197]

AFTER OCTOBER 7

We had a look at atrocity propaganda, incitements, and blood libels that followed October 7. But the media promotes propaganda in much more subtle ways too: using language in the passive voice, not naming the perpetrator when it's Israel, ignoring important facts, twisting news it reports on, avoiding certain words, and republishing dubious Israeli claims without verifying their truthfulness.

The Intercept conducted an analysis of major media coverage in the US, and it found that these newspapers used **biased language**; they disproportionately emphasized Israeli deaths in the conflict; used emotive language to describe the killings of Israelis, but not Palestinians; and offered lopsided coverage of antisemitic acts in the US, while largely ignoring anti-Muslim racism in the wake of October 7. Highly emotive terms for the killing of civilians like "slaughter," "massacre," and "horrific" were reserved almost exclusively for Israelis who were killed by Palestinians, rather than the other way around. The lack of coverage for the unprecedented killing of children and journalists, groups that typically elicit sympathy from Western media, is clearly visible.[198]

The New York Times also instructed journalists covering Israel's war on the Gaza Strip not to use the terms "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing" and to "avoid" using the phrase "occupied territory" when describing Palestinian land. The memo also restricted reporters from using the word Palestine "except in very rare cases" and instructed them to steer clear of the term "refugee camps" when describing areas of Gaza historically settled by displaced Palestinians.[199]

This anti-Palestinian bias in the media aligns with a similar survey of US cable news that found an even wider disparity.[200]

In the UK, the situation is not any better at all. The Centre for Media Monitoring analyzed in detail the BBC's Gaza coverage in the year following Hamas' attack on October 7. It looked at: uneven casualty reporting despite mounting Palestinian deaths; imbalance in victim representation; delegitimizing death tolls; bias through language choices; identifying perpetrators of war crimes; contrasting approaches to Israeli and Palestinian voices and perspectives; withholding contemporary context where it matters; dismissing allegations of genocide and failing to call out war crimes; humanizing Israelis but not Palestinians; underreporting the killing of journalists; war crimes in Ukraine highlighted, while those in Gaza downplayed.[201]

The report found a "pattern of bias, double standards and silencing of Palestinian voices." These aren't editorial slip-ups. They reveal a systematic, long-term skewing of editorial coverage in Israel's favor.[202] And everyone who lives in the UK must, by law, pay a license fee for this state propaganda or else be fined.

Many Western journalists, and especially their editors, are complicit; some because of conviction, others because of pressure. There are some, however, who have the **journalistic integrity** to speak up. Eight BBC journalists, for example, have written an open letter, accusing their own broadcaster of failing to accurately report on Israel-Palestine.[203] Another open letter was written by Australian journalists, calling on Australian newsrooms to undertake steps to improve coverage.[204] In the US, more than 1,500 journalists from dozens of news organizations have signed an open letter protesting the media's coverage of Israel's atrocities against Palestinians since the October 7th attack.[205]

The narratives in Western media rooms are often formed by **stories planted by Israeli propagandists**. An Israeli news site, *Calcalist*, explains proudly in Hebrew how these hasbara professionals "initiated dozens of articles in the international press, such as CNN, MSNBC, New York Post, Washington Post, Sky News, Guardian, Telegraph, Daily Mail, and more," including the stories about "widespread and systematic" sexual violence.

Adi Wegman, Shir Landau and Shirona Partam are three women in their 40s who met 20 years ago as part of a course for the IDF Spokesperson Unit. They "assisted" primarily foreign media, with the aim of minimizing any damage that might result from a lack of public relations or ineffective public relations.

"In the past two months, our team members have worked on hundreds of articles published in foreign media around the world," explained Partam. "We led the exposure of the rape cases on CNN. In addition, we have established a set of content products for foreign media in Israel, including briefings in five languages, in-depth contextual briefings, and more."[206]

Israel has also contracted **public relations companies** to bolster its image online among the United States' Christian right, filings under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) show.[207]

But these days, it's not only humans who spread propaganda: **smart bots on social media** have emerged as an unexpected weapon in Israel's war on Gaza.

A bot, short for robot, is a software program that performs automated, repetitive tasks. By the end of 2023, nearly half of all internet traffic was bots, found a study by United States cybersecurity company Imperva. This was partly due to the increasing popularity of artificial intelligence (AI) for generating text and images.

According to Lebanese researchers Ralph Baydoun, the pro-Israeli bots identified mainly aim to sow doubt and confusion about a pro-Palestinian narrative rather than to persuade social media users to trust them instead. Bot armies —up to millions of malicious bots—are used in large-scale disinformation campaigns to sway public opinion. As bots become more advanced, it is harder to tell the difference between bot and human content.

Superbots target high-value users like verified accounts or those with high reach. They search for recent posts with defined keywords or hashtags. A response is generated to the targeted post by feeding its content into an LLM, like ChatGPT. A sample prompt is given: "Imagine you are a

user on Twitter. You hold staunch views. Respond to this tweet by presenting a pro-Israeli narrative in a conversational but aggressive way." ChatGPT will generate a text response, and if the original poster replies to the bot's comment, the "conversation" gets going. The superbot can be relentless, repeating the process indefinitely.[208]

But bots sometimes can go rogue. *Haaretz* reported a case where an AI-powered pro-Israel bot started criticizing the same social media accounts it was meant to promote. It called IDF soldiers "white colonizers in apartheid Israel," and even went so far as to "blame Israel for the U.S. plan to ban TikTok."[209]

In this case, the AI was right on most points, including **TikTok**. It is now undeniable that the US targeted TikTok on Israel's behalf. In a meeting with American influencers at Israel's Consulate General in New York in September 2025, Benjamin Netanyahu admitted weaponizing social media.

"We have to fight with the weapons that apply to the battlefield," he said. "The most important purchase going on right now is TikTok. Number one. And I hope it goes through because it can be consequential. And the other one? X. We have to talk to Elon. He's not an enemy, he's a friend. We should talk to him. Now, if we can get those two things, we get a lot.… We have to fight the fight, to give direction to the Jewish people and give direction to our non-Jewish friends."[210]

The remarks came a day after US President Donald Trump approved a deal to transfer TikTok's US operations to an American investor group that includes the software (and surveillance) company Oracle, founded by pro-Israel billionaire Larry Ellison. He also influences **traditional US media** through his $8 billion merger with Paramount Global (controlling CBS, Paramount Pictures, MTV) in August 2025,[211] appointing Bari Weiss, who once proudly admitted to being a "Zionist fanatic," as editor-in-chief.[212] Ellison's son, David, is bidding for Warner Bros. Discovery (CNN, HBO, TBS),[213] potentially creating a pro-Israeli empire blending news, streaming, and social feeds with hundreds of millions users.

From Counterterrorism to Regime-Change Wars

In both cycles, leaders started with narrow, actionable goals and drifted toward maximal, ill-defined end states. Limited missions became elastic projects measured not by discrete targets but by aspirational conditions ("eradication," "stable democracy," "a different Middle East"). As objectives swelled, timelines lengthened, stakeholders multiplied, and the political costs of de-escalation rose—creating a ratchet that turns retaliation into a long war. What began as retaliation in one theater metastasized across borders, often accompanied by regime-change ambitions. After 9/11, the United States struck Afghanistan, then invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein, and conducted lethal operations in several other countries. Post-October 7, Israel's war in Gaza has been accompanied by repeated strikes in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and in 2025 attacks on Iran and Qatar.

"WAR ON TERROR"

The initial mandate—neutralize al-Qaeda and its Afghan haven—quickly broadened. "Decapitate the network" became "stand up a stable democracy," then "train and equip local forces," each rung demanding more time, money, and patience. The focus morphed into the Global War on Terror, an umbrella that bundled disparate groups and regimes under one banner. Afghanistan turned into state-building; Iraq followed under the logic of preemption and regime change; and targeted killings were conducted in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. During the second phase of the War on Terror under the Obama administration, new conflict zones emerged. Iraq erupted again with the rise of ISIS, and the US became deeply involved in the events of Syria and Libya. According to several declassified documents, the US was involved in supporting the Syrian opposition even before the conflict began in 2011.

Let's start at the beginning. To attack **Afghanistan**, the US needed the help of regional allies for basing, overflight, logistics, and intelligence. It already had a presence in the Gulf Arab states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. Other countries that joined included Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

Pakistan, under President Pervez Musharraf, became the most involved, providing access to airspace, intelligence, and logistical support for operations in Afghanistan. Pakistan had its own terrorist groups, and the US began drone strikes in its tribal areas targeting al-Qaeda and Taliban militants in 2004. After the formation of the Pakistani Taliban branch, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, in 2007, the conflict expanded, leading to regular US drone strikes, major internal military operations by the Pakistani army, and significant civilian casualties.

During the war in **Iraq**, virtually every state bordering the country, plus Gulf hosts, became involved—either as a US partner, staging base, or indirect player through proxies or resistance movements. Active US allies included Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, while Iran, Syria, and Turkey were drawn in by proximity or proxy.

Iran opposed the US invasion publicly but benefited strategically from Saddam's fall; it provided covert aid and training to Shia militias (e.g., Badr Corps, later Kata'ib Hezbollah) in Iraq and still has close connections to the Shia half of the country. After the Syrian conflict began in 2011, Iran firmly stood by Bashar al-Assad. It also supported Hezbollah, both in Syria and Lebanon, and effectively built a land corridor from Iran.

Turkey debated but refused US ground invasion access from its territory in a 2003 parliamentary vote. However, it later conducted military incursions of its own into northern Iraq against Kurdish groups (PKK), and became deeply involved in the events in Syria after 2011. Turkish forces launched multiple attacks against the Kurdish YPG/SDF—key US partners against ISIS—while installing Turkish-backed factions. Turkey was one of the key supporters of the Sunni rebels against Assad.

Syria allowed US-allied fighters to cross into Iraq early on but later supported anti-US insurgents; relations with Washington deteriorated and US regime-change ambitions started in 2005. It was first reported in 2006 in a *Time* article,[214] and a WikiLeaks release in 2016 confirmed that US money for Syrian opposition figures began flowing under President George W. Bush, after he effectively froze political ties with Damascus in 2005. The financial backing continued under President Obama.[215] It was known from the beginning of the civil unrest in 2011 that protests were infiltrated by armed jihadists provoking the army into deadly fights,[216] and that weapons, including machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers, were smuggled in from Iraq, Lebanon, and Turkey.[217] *DEBKAfile*, an Israeli news and intelligence website known for publishing security, military, and geopolitical reports, claimed that NATO already planned involvement in August 2011. "NATO headquarters in Brussels and the Turkish high command are meanwhile drawing up plans for their first military step in Syria, which is to arm the rebels with weapons for combating the tanks and helicopters," it wrote. NATO strategists were thinking "pouring large quantities of anti-tank and anti-air rockets, mortars and heavy machine guns into the protest centers for beating back the government armored forces." The plan was "to get the weapons to their destination overland, namely through Turkey and under Turkish army protection." Syrian opposition already started "training in the use of the new weapons with Turkish military officers at makeshift installations in Turkish bases near the Syrian border."[218]

A year later, in August 2012, *The New York Times* revealed that the US was planning regime change, with "countries, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, providing weapons, assisted by a small number of officers from the Central Intelligence Agency."[219] Obama and senior officials knew that arms sent to so-called "moderate rebels" went to jihadists, another *The New York Times* article disclosed only a couple of months later in the same year.[220] These plans evolved into Operation Timber Sycamore, a covert CIA program approved by President Obama in 2013.[221] They

knew exactly who they supported: "AQ [Al-Qaeda] is on our side in Syria," wrote famously Jake Sullivan to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, as uncovered by WikiLeaks in 2017.[222]

Another document claimed that an "Islamic State" was desired to sway Western policy in the region. It stated that "THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A DECLARED OR UNDECLARED SALAFIST PRINCIPALITY IN EASTERN SYRIA, AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT THE SUPPORTING POWERS TO THE OPPOSITION WANT."[223]

The operations in Syria, according to an email sent to and forwarded by Hillary Clinton, were "to help Israel."[224] Although more quietly and not to the same extent, Israel also took part in supporting terrorist groups in Syria. They regularly bombed Hezbollah and Iranian targets in Syria, which was an important help for the jihadi groups. As the joke said, it's not true al-Qaeda doesn't have an air force: it is the IAF. But Israel also helped terrorist groups directly.

Israel secretly armed and funded at least 12 rebel groups in southern Syria. The military transfers included assault rifles, machine guns, mortar launchers, and transport vehicles, wrote Elizabeth Tsurkov in a 2018 *Foreign Policy* article.[225] (As a side note, former IDF intelligence officer Tsurkov was kidnapped in Iraq in 2023, and released in 2025.) Israel's support for Syrian rebels was also reported by *The Wall Street Journal*[226] and *The Times of Israel*.[227] Israel also provided medical treatment to injured fighters, *The Times of Israel* wrote. Many were wounded in fighting against Assad's army; "Sunni jihadist groups," admitted the article, "are also present there." Israel claimed it did not back the rebels, but the Israeli Druze population knew otherwise. The Druze on the Israeli side of the Golan had relatives across the fence allied to Assad's regime, and they were worried as jihadists launched assaults on their villages in Syria. In 2015, some Druze even carried out attacks on IDF military vehicles inside Israel, transporting injured Syrian rebels to hospital, killing one of the wounded.[228] *The Jerusalem Post* wasn't so shy to name these rebels: "Israel treating al-Qaida fighters wounded in Syria civil war," they wrote.[229]

Libya, long listed as a supporter of terrorism, started its rapprochement with the West in 1999, when its leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi handed over the Lockerbie bombing suspects. The 2003 Iraq war created a new situation. Gaddafi publicly opposed it, and treated it as a warning that prompted him to radically change Libya's policy to avoid being "the next Iraq." He denounced Saddam's execution at an Arab League summit, calling the new Iraqi authorities a US puppet. At the same time, Gaddafi decided to give up Libya's weapons of mass destruction programs and allow international inspections, and agreed to pay nearly €3 billion in compensation for the Lockerbie and UTA bombings. These moves led to normalization with the US, UK, and EU —what Western officials later called the "Libya model."[230]

However, Gaddafi was betrayed. France under President Nicolas Sarkozy, with the UK's David Cameron, led the political push in early March 2011 to intervene in Libya—the very same Sarkozy who received €50 million in support from Gaddafi for his reelection.[231] The Obama administration joined once there was Arab League backing and a UN mandate. The push for the intervention, according to declassified emails sent to Hillary Clinton by Sidney Blumenthal, was "to quash plans by Gaddafi to use $7 billion in secret gold and silver to prop up a new African currency. The French worried the move would undercut the currency guaranteed by the French treasury, known as the CFA franc, which is widely used in West Africa."[232] After Gaddafi's lynching, Clinton laughed: "We came, we saw, he died."[233]

Following Gaddafi's fall, some of Libya's arms were sent to Syria. Judicial Watch, a conservative US watchdog that uses Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests to promote transparency and accountability, found that the Obama administration knew about these arms transfers, and that they went to "the Salafist, the Muslim Brotherhood, and AQI [Al-Qaeda in Iraq]." Even more shocking, another FOIA document dated September 12, 2012, the day after the attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi that killed four American citizens, revealed that the administration knew the attack had been "planned ten or more days prior."[234]

The War on Terror also affected the **Sahel** region. Arms from Libya after Gaddafi's fall spread to this semi-arid strip south of the Sahara Desert, strengthening terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS-linked Boko Haram in that region. Today's terrorist attacks in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria are the consequences of this arms outflow from Libya.

In East Africa, **Somalia** was included in the US military's "Horn of Africa" counterterrorism operations beginning in 2002, run from a base in Djibouti. In 2006, US counterterrorism assistance helped catalyze the intervention by Ethiopian troops that toppled the Islamic Courts Union, the organization that helped spawn the al-Qaeda affiliated Al-Shabaab group. The US funded and advised the African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission (AMISOM/ATMIS), and conducted recurring air and drone strikes; the campaign weakened insurgents at times but also caused civilian harm. Terrorist groups still remain in Somalia, and US counterterrorism operations are still ongoing.

In **Yemen**, the US launched its first drone strike in 2002, killing an al-Qaeda suspect—this effectively marked Yemen's entry into the War on Terror. In 2009, the creation of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) made Yemen a central theater for US counterterrorism. From 2011 till present, the US drone campaigns intensified, overlapping with Yemen's civil war and later with the Saudi-led intervention in 2015. The strikes killed militants—including US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki—but also civilians, which fueled backlash. Yemen's later civil war layered on top of this counterterror frame, with ongoing US actions against Houthis (Ansar Allah) and AQAP to this day.

Sudan, labeled a "state sponsor of terrorism," faced years of sanctions, but after 9/11 it cooperated with the US for gradual rehabilitation. This cooperation aided the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, granting southern autonomy. Sudan was split into two countries, Sudan and South Sudan, in July 2011. In both countries there has been turmoil ever since, with an ongoing genocide in the former.

"WAR ON HAMAS"

After October 7, Israel's starting aims—destroying Hamas's military capacity, freeing hostages, and restoring deterrence—quickly expanded to total "eradication," land grab labeled "buffer zones," and visions of regional reordering. Lebanon, Syria, and Iran became the main focus.

Right after October 7, Israeli military operations in the **West Bank** intensified dramatically, accompanied by explicit statements—predominantly in Hebrew—from officials and settlers advocating ethnic cleansing and outright annexation. Under direct ministerial protection, settler violence escalated unchecked, while the IDF demolished Palestinian homes and infrastructure at the fastest rate in decades.

From **Lebanon**, Hezbollah initially inflicted considerable disruption, primarily in northern Israel, but by late 2024 it was decapitated through targeted Israeli operations. These attacks were effective but indiscriminate. An entire city block in Beirut's southern Dahiyeh suburb was obliterated with US-supplied bunker-busting bombs,[235] killing at least 37 civilians—including entire families—to eliminate Hezbollah's spiritual leader Hassan Nasrallah.[236] On September 17 and 18, thousands of pagers and other devices were detonated across Lebanon and parts of Syria, injuring more than 2,931 people and killing 37—including at least four civilians,[237] among them two children.[238] In January 2025, Gen. Joseph Aoun, a "US-backed army chief" was elected as Lebanon's president,[239] and Nawaf Salam, backed by Saudi Arabia and Western countries,[240] was appointed as Prime Minister; Lebanon was—at least for the time being—neutralized as a regional threat. The new Lebanese government has repeatedly demonstrated its inability or unwillingness—apart from public condemnations—to act against Israeli aggression,[241] trying instead to disarm Hezbollah.[242] The Shia group, although now quiet, is said to be regrouping and rearming, expecting further conflicts with Israel, which hasn't stopped attacks inside Lebanon since the so-called ceasefire agreement in November 2024.[243]

In **Syria**, after 14 years of sustained US, European, Turkish, and Gulf backing for opposition forces consisting mainly of various radical Islamist groups, Bashar al-Assad's regime collapsed in December 2024; Assad fled to Russia, and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) led by Ahmed al-Sharaa emerged in control. HTS was the dominant jihadist faction in northwest Syria, which emerged from a rebranding of al-Qaeda's former Syrian branch. Al-Sharaa was its leader, known as Abu Muhammad al-Jolani at the time. He "graduated" from the famous Camp Bucca[244] that radicalized ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and which even the RAND Corporation called a "jihadi university."[245] The US State Department had a multi-million-dollar bounty on Jolani's head until December 2024.

Israel played an important role in Assad's fall, as it carried out extensive airstrikes in Syria during the jihadists' surprisingly fast road to victory in late 2024. According to Netanyahu, this event "reshaped the Middle East,"[246] and he even claimed credit for starting the "historic" process that led to the fall of the Assad regime.[247] Syria's military infrastructure had already been damaged through years of Israeli strikes and rebel gains, but what remained was systematically dismantled after Assad's fall. Israel now occupies expansive southern territories, including a broadened Golan buffer, while the new regime with al-Sharaa as president has indicated openness to normalizing relations with Israel in return for international legitimacy.

Regime-change in **Iran** has been a goal for decades, promoted by US neocons and their Israeli allies. Netanyahu finally had a chance to attack the country and drag the US into the war. Israel did not achieve its objectives in the so-called Twelve-Day War of June 2025, and its desire for regime change is likely not over.

Acting with Impunity — War Crimes and Legal Exceptionalism

The US and its allies committed war crimes during the War on Terror, beyond any doubt. The record shows a pattern: documented abuses in Afghanistan and Iraq yielded rare, lenient prosecutions mostly for low-level personnel, while whistleblowers who exposed wrongdoing faced aggressive charges and prison. Washington simultaneously carved out exceptions to international accountability, shielding its officials from external courts. After October 7, Israel's campaign in Gaza produced mass civilian harm and a string of war crimes that many experts call a genocide, paired with legal exceptionalism: rejecting the applicability of occupation law, disputing the authority of international bodies, and pressing allies to ignore warrants. This section outlines the major incidents, the limited accountability, and the escalating efforts to bully or bypass the very bodies meant to enforce the laws of war.

"WAR ON TERROR"

Many cases of war crimes committed by the US and its allies in Afghanistan and Iraq have been documented, but let's just look at the most notable cases.

In one of the first major mass-casualty incidents in Afghanistan, what became known as the "**container killings**," around 2,000 Taliban prisoners suffocated to death in sealed shipping containers after their capture by Northern Alliance forces in November 2001.[248] Starting in late 2001, the CIA created "**black-sites**" around the world, and its rendition program used waterboarding, sleep deprivation, and other forms of torture, what they called "enhanced interrogation"; accountability remained largely administrative, with no criminal convictions of senior architects. Quite the contrary; Gina Haspel, who ran the CIA's Thailand black site and authorized and oversaw

waterboarding and other torture, later became the first female CIA director.[249] Established in January 2002, the **Guantánamo Bay Detention Camp** (GTMO) held terrorism suspects indefinitely; labeled "unlawful combatants," most were never charged or put on trial, which undermined *habeas corpus*, denying detainees basic legal protections. As of January 2025, 15 inmates remain.[250] In September 2009, a German commander called in an airstrike on **fuel tankers** near Kunduz, killing scores of civilians; Germany later paid compensation and the colonel was removed from command, but German courts declined criminal charges.[251] The **Kandahar massacre** (2012) saw Staff Sgt. Robert Bales murder 16 civilians in night raids across two villages; he pleaded guilty and received life imprisonment without parole after a court-martial.[252] Repeated night raids and so-called "double-tap" strikes (a follow-up strike on first-responders) drew UN and NGO condemnation, but individual cases seldom produced US criminal prosecutions. An Australian inquiry (*Brereton Report*, 2020) found "credible evidence" of unlawful killings by **Australian SAS** in the 2012 period; administrative actions followed, one former soldier (Oliver Schulz) has been charged with a war crime and awaits trial, and the unit's citation was revoked.[253] Separate **UK SAS** allegations (2010-2013) of extra-judicial killings in night operations have led to ongoing investigations and civil litigation, but as of now have not yielded criminal convictions.[254] In Kunduz (2015), a US AC-130 gunship struck **Médecins Sans Frontières**' hospital, killing 42; a Pentagon inquiry called it a tragic mistake and issued 16 administrative actions (reprimands, suspensions) but no criminal charges.[255]

In Iraq, the case of abuses at the **Abu Ghraib** prison made headlines (2003-04). US personnel abused detainees with beatings, sexual humiliation, and stress positions; courts-martial convicted several low-ranking soldiers—Charles Graner (10 years), Lynndie England (3 years), Ivan Frederick (8 years), Sabrina Harman (6 months), and Jeremy Sivits (1 year)—while higher-level command responsibility remained uncharged.[256] **Camp Breadbasket** (Basra, 2003)

saw British troops abuse detainees; Cpl. Daniel Kenyon received 18 months, LCpl. Mark Cooley 2 years, and LCpl. Darren Larkin 140 days, with some sentences later reduced on appeal.[257] Additional detainee-abuse sites, such as **Camp Nama** (established in 2003) were reported by journalists and human-rights groups, yet prosecutions were limited and largely avoided senior responsibility.[258] Multiple **wedding-party bombings** (e.g., Mukaradeeb, 2004) drew condemnation over civilian deaths; the US typically denied wrongdoing, and no US criminal prosecutions followed. During the **Fallujah** operations (2004), allegations arose of indiscriminate bombardment and white phosphorus use against combatants embedded in urban areas; official positions maintained lawful employment under the law of armed conflict, and no US criminal convictions resulted.[259] In **Haditha** (2005), 24 Iraqis were killed by US Marines after an IED attack; most charges were dropped or acquitted, and squad leader Frank Wuterich pled guilty to negligent dereliction, receiving no jail time but a rank/pay reduction.[260] The **Mahmudiyah atrocity** (2006) involved the rape and murder of Abeer al-Janabi and the killings of her family by US soldiers; ringleader Steven Green received life without parole in federal court, while co-conspirators got lengthy military sentences (e.g., 90-110 years, some parole-eligible).[261] At **Nisour Square** (2007), Blackwater contractors killed 14 civilians; in US courts Nicholas Slatten received life, and Paul Slough, Evan Liberty, Dustin Heard received 30-year terms, but all four were pardoned in 2020 by Donald Trump.[262]

To protect war criminals, the US disregarded international law and even threatened retaliation. In 2002, President Bush signed into law the American Servicemembers Protection Act, which aimed to protect US servicemembers from the International Criminal Court (ICC). The new law authorized the use of military force to liberate any American being held by the court. This provision, dubbed the "**Hague invasion clause**," triggered a strong reaction from US allies around the world, particularly in the Netherlands. The law also provided for the withdrawal of US military assistance from countries ratifying the ICC treaty, and restricted US

participation in United Nations peacekeeping unless the United States obtained immunity from prosecution.[263]

But it wasn't only the Bush administration that was complicit in war crimes. Beginning in 2009, Obama—who Noam Chomsky called a war criminal[264] and "worse than George Bush and Tony Blair"[265]—greatly expanded the US drone strike program, authorizing targeted killings in countries such as Yemen and Pakistan. Weekly "Terror Tuesday" meetings reviewed **drone kill lists** for approval, leading to over 4,000 drone strikes and an estimated 1,501 civilian deaths.[266] In 2011, the US carried out its first known assassination of an American citizen abroad—Anwar al-Awlaki—in Yemen.[267]

While war criminals were protected, whistleblowers who exposed these wars often faced harsher penalties than the perpetrators. **Julian Assange**, the founder of WikiLeaks, gained global attention after releasing the "Collateral Murder" video in 2010; later accused of politically motivated, false crimes,[268] he spent years in asylum and imprisonment before finally being freed in 2024 under a plea deal. **Chelsea Manning** received 35 years (commuted in 2017) for disclosing documents including the Iraq/Afghanistan logs and the "Collateral Murder" video, and later was jailed for contempt related to a grand jury.[269] **Daniel Hale** was sentenced to 45 months for leaking documents on the US drone program, including civilian-casualty issues tied to Afghanistan and beyond.[270] **John Kiriakou** served 30 months after confirming aspects of the CIA torture program to a reporter,[271] while **Matthew Diaz** (Navy JAG) served 6 months and was dismissed for mailing a Guantánamo detainee list to a rights group.[272] In allied jurisdictions, **David McBride** (Australia) was prosecuted and sentenced for leaking the Afghan Files that helped precipitate the *Brereton Report*,[273] and **Katharine Gun** (UK), who exposed a pre-Iraq vote UN spying memo, was charged under the Official Secrets Act before the case was dropped.[274] Even **Joe Darby**, who internally reported the Abu Ghraib abuse, endured death threats and had to live under protection rather than receiving robust institutional support.[275]

"WAR ON HAMAS"

Since the Zionist project began in the early 20th century, Jewish paramilitary groups[276] and then the state[277] have committed many gruesome atrocities, but what has followed since October 7 is unprecedented in the post-WWII era. Reported violations span a wide range; the examples next are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment in populated areas, including markets and refugee tents.[278] Strikes on **hospitals and medical staff**;[279] attacks on **aid convoys**[280] and **warehouses**.[281] The **destruction** of **cultural**, **religious**, and **educational sites**.[282] The widespread **demolition of homes and infrastructure** to make Gaza uninhabitable.[283] The **use of white phosphorus**[284] and other **banned or indiscriminate weapons** such as "robots" (remote-controlled APCs) loaded with explosives.[285]

The **systematic targeting of journalists**: as of March 2025, at least 232 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza since the war began; it is more than the US Civil War, World Wars I and II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the wars in Yugoslavia, and the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan combined.[286]

Other **unlawful killings**, including alleged **mass executions**: in one case 300 bodies were found, some with hands tied;[287] Amit Halevi from Netanyahu's Likud party on Kan TV admitted that Israel executed 150 detainees (patients and medical staff) from al-Shifa Hospital, he just called them terrorists; to make sure we understand that for him every Palestinian civilian is a terrorist, he added: "At the same time, 300 terrorists were born in the maternity ward."[288]

Organ harvesting from Palestinian bodies: despite denials, it's been happening for a long time,[289] and recent accusations were made in the Gaza war too.[290]

The widespread **use of human shields**, known in Israeli military lingo as "Mosquito Protocol"[291]: they are sometimes killed after they completed their task, as this 80-year old man who was used with an explosive belt tied around his neck then sent into a kill-zone, reported by *HaMakom*.[292]

Palestinian civilians **forced to search for explosives**: in one case, the reason given was that it is "because too many [explosives detection] dogs had died."[293]

Taking **civilian hostages**: the use of detention without charge has roughly tripled overall and increased even more sharply for minors and women since October 7. Israel is currently holding over 10,000 Palestinians on "security" grounds, of whom about 3,500-3,600 are in administrative detention without charge or trial, including roughly 400 children and around 50-60 women, plus an unknown number of Gazans held without charge in army-run camps.[294]

Torture and sexual abuse in detention: the case that grabbed some attention in the west was about a detainee who was sodomized with an assault rifle in the notorious Sde Teiman detention camp; but the news only made international headlines after Israel's top military prosecutor, Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi, who leaked the video, was harassed, driven near suicide, detained and charged.[295] At the same time, an Israeli lawmaker defended the rape,[296] the perpetrators are celebrated as heroes by some,[297] and 65% of Israelis believe they should not face criminal charges and just be disciplined by the army.[298] It wasn't a rare case; it is documented that sexual and gender-based violence by Israeli security forces is "widespread and systematic";[299] it's also claimed that Israeli prison guards are using dogs to rape Palestinians.[300] However, out of more than 1,450 complaints filed against interrogators between 1992 and early 2023, criminal investigations have been opened in just three cases, and none led to indictments.[301]

The **obstruction of humanitarian relief** to cause mass starvation: it has created conditions widely described as engineered mass starvation, with aid convoys blocked, food supplies restricted, and entire communities pushed to the brink of famine. Mothers have been unable to obtain infant formula, hospitals have run out of medicine, and doctors were forced to operate on patients without basic painkillers.

A bizarre period during the forced starvation was the repeated **shooting of starving people**, assisted by the US-Israeli backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). CNN

investigated one of the first incidents and experts found the rate of gunfire and images of bullets retrieved from victims were consistent with machine guns used by the IDF that can be mounted on tanks.[302] A more recent CNN investigation found that many of those who were killed were bulldozed in mass graves along the route to an aid distribution point.[303]

A comprehensive accounting of Israeli war crimes is far beyond this space, but multiple monitoring bodies have been documenting these patterns in detail.

Within the UN human rights system, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**) issues frequent situation updates, while the UN Commission of Inquiry (**COI**) aggregates evidence into legal findings on war crimes and crimes against humanity, identifying recurring practices such as collective punishment and unlawful attacks on civilian objects.[304] The UN agency, **OCHA** publishes dashboards on fatalities, displacement, access constraints, and damage to essential services.[305]

Amnesty International[306] and **Human Rights Watch**[307] publish case files and thematic reports—on alleged starvation as a method of warfare, individual strikes on residential buildings, schools, and convoys, the use of explosive weapons in dense urban areas, and the treatment of detainees. Their investigations combine field interviews, open-source analysis, and legal assessment under international humanitarian law.

Humanitarian and rights organizations provide additional, routine documentation. The Israeli organization **B'Tselem** maintains casualty and demolition databases spanning years.[308] The **Palestinian Centre for Human Rights** (PCHR) issues weekly reports detailing incidents, arrests, and legal actions, with citations to relevant law.[309]

Attacks on the press are tracked by **Reporters Without Borders** (RSF),[310] the **International Federation of Journalists** (IFJ),[311] and the **Committee to Protect Journalists** (CPJ),[312] maintain registries of journalists killed, injured, detained, or missing, and submit dossiers to international courts.

The **Hind Rajab Organization**—a newly formed accountability group named after the little girl killed with her family under a hail of bullets—pursues alleged war criminals world wide. It documents incidents, preserves evidence, supports families, and collaborates with legal teams and rights groups to file cases and press for prosecution.[313]

A "textbook case of genocide"

Many call what is unfolding in Gaza a genocide, including prominent Israeli figures, as well as all the major humanitarian organizations, such as B'Tselem, International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch.

Over 500 staff from around 140 Jewish organizations, in an open letter, labeled Israel's military campaign in Gaza as genocide.[314] There are also several distinguished Jewish academics and scholars with the same opinion.

Raz Segal, an Israeli-American historian and genocide scholar, was among the first to label Israel's actions in Gaza as a "textbook case of genocide."[315]

Omer Bartov, a renowned Holocaust and genocide studies scholar at Brown University, initially hesitated but later concluded that Israel's actions in Gaza constitute "systematic war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocidal actions."[316]

Israeli historian **Ilan Pappé**, a prominent figure among the "New Historians" who challenge traditional Israeli narratives, has been outspoken in his assessment of Israeli policy and consistently uses the term "genocide."[317]

Avi Shlaim, another leading "New Historian" who uncovered that the 1950s Iraq bombings were false-flag attacks carried out by Zionists to force Jewish immigration,[318] just published a book on the topic in May 2025, titled: *Genocide in Gaza: Israel, Hamas, and the Long War on Palestine*.[319]

Amos Goldberg, a professor of Holocaust history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, stated, "What is happening in Gaza is a genocide because Gaza does not exist anymore," referencing the extensive destruction and civilian casualties.[320]

Eyal Weizman, an Israeli architect and director of Forensic Architecture, has analyzed Israel's military strategies in Gaza, concluding they form part of a "genocidal campaign."[321]

Daniel Blatman, a pro-Israeli Holocaust historian at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, stopped short of pronouncing the "g word," but expressed profound distress over Israel's military actions, stating, "I never imagined in my worst nightmares that the Jewish state would bomb starving children to death."[322]

No shame, no accountability

Unlike other groups in history accused of war crimes, many Israelis do not try to hide them and even express pride. Almost half of them believe that international laws and norms do not apply to them: according to a poll, 47 percent of Israeli Jews hold the view that Israel should not obey international law and moral values during Israel's ongoing war.[323] Another poll found that 82% supports the expulsion of all Palestinians from Gaza.[324] (By contrast, in the US, 61% of Jews say Israel commits war crimes and 39% believe it amounts to genocide.[325])

A large number of Jews believe they are the "chosen people,"[326] and some views are truly shocking. Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsburgh, a Chabad Kabbalist, wrote in 1994: "Jewish blood is worthier than gentile blood. According to kabbalistic conceptions, the Jews are above nature."[327] A now archived article in *The Times of Israel* blog claimed that "to see Jews as equal is antisemitic," and explained that "when one says that Jews are just like everyone else, you're a bigot."[328] Such rhetoric echoes in statements like Bezalel Smotrich's claim that it may be "moral" to starve two million Gazans.[329]

It is important to note that many Jews, secular and religious, do not believe in Jewish supremacy. Anti-Zionist religious Jews explain that this is a distortion of their faith: "chosen" means responsibility, not privilege—that they were chosen to keep God's 613 commandments in the Torah, not that they are worth more than others.

Israel also rejects international law in official policy. After the International Criminal Court (ICC) sought arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, Israeli officials—and American allies—threatened retaliation against the ICC, including its officials and their families.[330] Israel further announced visa refusals for UN officials, limiting access and cooperation with UN mechanisms.[331]

The United States, of course, has stood firmly with Israel. Washington issued executive measures sanctioning ICC judges and prosecutors over the Israel/Gaza cases.[332] Congress also introduced the Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act, to sanction foreign persons who assist the ICC in investigating, arresting, detaining, or prosecuting certain individuals.[333] Despite the warrants, Netanyahu visited the US multiple times.

Several European leaders signaled similar exceptionalism. Germany's Friedrich Merz, upon winning the election for chancellor, publicly assured that he would "find a way" for Netanyahu to visit the country without facing arrest.[334]

Italian ministers likewise indicated that Netanyahu would not be arrested if he entered Italy, suggesting that the government would either reinterpret or sidestep its international commitments.[335]

Hungary, under Viktor Orbán, went even further—openly embracing Netanyahu with full political support and announcing its intention to withdraw from the ICC altogether, underscoring Budapest's willingness to reject international legal norms in order to defend Israel's leadership.[336]

Human Cost — Deaths and Displacement

The real cost of war—the saddest price—is measured not in buildings destroyed or dollars spent, but in human lives lost. The US-led War on Terror left millions dead across multiple countries. And today, according to some claims, the "war on Hamas" has already caused hundreds of thousands of deaths.

"WAR ON TERROR"

In 2021, Brown University's Costs of War project published its analysis of the number of people killed in direct violence due to the post-9/11 War on Terror, and it found that just under **a million people**—between 897,000 and 929,000—were **killed directly** due to violence across five theaters of war involving significant US and Western military involvement: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.[337] In their 2023 report, they included indirect mortality, and the number of deaths was a staggering 4.5-4.6 million. The study also found that around **38 million** people were **displaced** as a result of these armed conflicts. The number of US troops killed is small by comparison, around 7,000 deaths—it's still tragic since they were sent there to kill and die for a lie. Around 8,000 contractors were also killed,[338] but let's keep in mind, they went there willingly for money as part of a system that inflicted violence on local populations.

But these numbers, claims another investigation, are still extremely conservative estimates. According to a report by the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, in "the majority of conflicts since the early 1990s, for which good data is available, the burden of indirect deaths was between 3 and 15 times the number of direct deaths." For instance, six months after the bombing campaign in Afghanistan in 2001, data assessed by *The Guardian* revealed that, although between 1,300 and 1,800 Afghans were killed directly, as many as 20,000 and possibly as high as 49,600 people had died due to the indirect

consequences of the military intervention. In this case, the total number of indirect deaths was at least 15 times higher than the number of direct deaths.

If that higher, empirically substantiated ratio were applied to the Costs of War direct death figures in Afghanistan since 9/11 (176,000 people), it would imply 2.64 million indirect deaths in just one country due to the War on Terror—far higher in magnitude than generally accepted estimates.

This scale of violence has been corroborated by another assessment of avoidable mortality in Afghanistan by retired La Trobe University biochemist Dr. Gideon Polya. His book, *Body Count: Global Avoidable Mortality Since 1950*, put total excess deaths of Afghans since 2001 at three million.

The assessment incorporated Brown University's figures, taking into account Libya as well, to develop a range of plausible estimates of indirect deaths. Rather than applying the Geneva Declaration approach wholesale to the overall direct death figures, the analysis applied it case-by-case for each theater of war to produce a likely order-of-magnitude figure for indirect deaths. When the number of direct and indirect deaths in each major war zone is then totaled, it reveals that at least **5.8 to 6 million people** are likely to have **died overall due to the War on Terror**—a staggering number that is still probably very conservative.

While it is obviously not possible to attribute these deaths specifically to a particular party in the way that has been attempted with direct death tallies, these deaths are causally related to the chain of events that began with post-9/11 military policies implemented by the US, UK, and other Western states.[339]

Then there are the displaced people. The 38 million figure by the Costs of War Project includes both refugees/asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs), with around 13.7 million of the former and 29 million of the latter (there is some overlap, as IDPs may become refugees). But this number is considered conservative due to challenges in data collection in war zones, underreporting of unregistered migrants, and the exclusion of indirect displacements (e.g., those fleeing economic collapse tied to conflict). Statistics for

refugees and asylum seekers could easily be 1.5 to 2 times higher than the findings suggest, according to the Investigative Reporting Workshop based at the School of Communication at American University.

A less conservative approach would include the displaced from all of Syria's provinces since 2014, or as early as 2013 when the US government began openly backing Syrian rebel groups. This could take the total to **between 48 million and 59 million displaced**, comparable to the scale of World War II's displacement (up to 64 million).[340]

"WAR ON HAMAS"

When talking about the number of deaths in Gaza, in the mainstream media it became compulsory to state every single time that the figures are provided by the "Hamas-run" Ministry of Health. This creates the basis for Zionist propagandists to question these numbers, to downplay the real human cost. However, Israeli intelligence services have studied these civilian casualty figures and concluded that the figures were generally accurate.[341] As of November 2025, over **70,000** people have been **killed** in the Gaza war, according to the ministry.[342]

The truth is, these numbers are indeed false—because they are underestimates. The ministry only counts those civilians who have died as a direct result of military action and who have been identified; the real cost is far higher.

In July 2024, the prestigious UK medical journal, *The Lancet*, wrote that "it is not implausible to estimate that up to **186 000 or even more deaths** could be attributable to the current conflict in Gaza." Using the 2022 Gaza Strip population estimate of 2.37 million, this would translate to 7.9% of the total population in the Gaza Strip.[343]

Does it sound too much? In fact, the figure could even be higher. In a live interview on the "Patriots" program on Israeli Channel 14, aired on June 25, 2025, Israel's radical Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich made an interesting statement about the population of Gaza:

"Move the 1.8 million, or something around that are there now, […] into a sterilized humanitarian area […] and then the Trump plan, from there transfer them to relocation in other countries."

Apart from unashamedly calling for ethnic cleansing a whole population, this statement claims that of the original 2.2-2.3 million inhabitants only 1.8 million are left! The video with English subtitles had been deleted from most social media accounts, but when I last checked in 2025 it was still available on X,[344] and on YouTube.[345] The video also disappeared from Channel 14's corresponding page,[346] but another Israeli media organization, Walla, has published a reference to this quote in Hebrew.[347]

This number has also been confirmed unintentionally by another source. Yaacov Garb, a professor of interdisciplinary environmental studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, estimated the current population of Gaza at 1.85 million, based on IDF data. The paper has been published on Harvard's website, and the figures are shown in the map on its 5th page (Gaza City: 1 million; Central Gaza: 0.35 million; Mawasi: 0.5 million).[348]

So if the original population was 2.2-2.4 million, it is now 350 to 600 thousand less. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), around 100,000 people managed to leave the strip until the end of 2024.[349] (Since then, the only border crossing out of Gaza at Rafah has been completely closed, so this number most probably hasn't changed.) So taking this 100,000 into account, Gaza's **population** has **decreased by 250-500 thousand** people, or roughly 10.4%-22.7%.

These numbers, at this stage, are still a speculation, but it is certain that the number of deaths—from direct and indirect causes—is way higher than the official figure by the "Hamas-run" Ministry of Health. Israel must let independent investigators in, but even if they try to obstruct the truth, the true scale of Israel's war crimes *will* come out!

The Scale of Destruction—Fallujah, Gaza, Hiroshima

The US and its allies caused a lot of destruction during the War on Terror, no question about that, but what Israel did to Gaza is beyond any precedent in recent history. Let's see the two cases side by side.

"WAR ON TERROR"

Afghanistan has suffered decades of war even before the US invasion, and much of its infrastructure was already damaged. Quantitative data on the exact numbers of buildings or civilian infrastructure destroyed during the US War on Terror is sparse, as the conflict involved targeted airstrikes, ground fighting, and indirect damage rather than widespread urban bombing. Available sources estimate over 85,000 US bombs dropped, leading to localized destruction of homes, villages, and utilities. Some cases gained international attention, such as the ICRC (Red Cross) warehouses in Kabul, bombed twice despite the fact that they coordinated with US forces regarding their location; the bombing of Al Jazeera's office in Kabul, also a confirmed safe location; the destruction of the MSF Trauma Hospital in Kunduz; and several cases of bombing weddings, civilian convoys, and fuel tankers. All in all, however, the level of destruction wasn't as severe as in Iraq. On the other hand, the environmental damage (unexploded ordnance, contamination, habitat degradation) left behind by the allied forces was very serious, which still affects people today.[350]

The US-led invasion and subsequent occupation of **Iraq** caused extensive destruction to numerous cities through airstrikes, ground battles, insurgent activities, and sectarian violence. Below is a list of key cities that suffered severe infrastructure damage, high civilian casualties, and long-term devastation. First let's look at the primary phase, from 2003 to 2011.

The capital, **Baghdad**, endured intense "shock and awe" bombing in March 2003, followed by urban combat, looting, and years of sectarian bombings. Infrastructure like power grids, the National Museum (looting of artifacts), and the Baghdad Zoo were heavily hit; ongoing power outages and displacement affected millions. **Sadr City**, a district in Baghdad and a Shia stronghold, was hit by sectarian bombings and 2008 militia clashes with US/Iraqi forces. Thousands of homes and infrastructure were damaged in heavy fighting. **Fallujah**, the site of two major US-led assaults (April and November 2004) against insurgents, suffered significant destruction. The southern port city of **Basra** faced heavy fighting during the initial invasion (March-April 2003) and later militia clashes. Oil infrastructure and urban areas were bombed; post-invasion insurgency led to prolonged instability and damage to Shia neighborhoods. The northern city of **Mosul** saw initial invasion skirmishes in 2003 and major insurgent activity, including the 2004 killing of Saddam's sons. It experienced airstrikes, car bombings, and urban warfare, contributing to significant structural and cultural losses. **Najaf**, the holy Shia city, became a flashpoint in 2004 clashes between US forces and the Mahdi Army militia, with heavy fighting around shrines causing damage to historic sites and residential areas. **Karbala**, another Shia holy city, suffered from 2004 militia battles and bombings, with damage to religious infrastructure and surrounding urban zones amid sectarian violence. **Nasiriyah** was a key battle site in March 2003 during the advance to Baghdad, where US forces faced strong resistance. Bridges, buildings, and civilian areas were destroyed in ambushes and artillery exchanges. **Ramadi**, the capital of Anbar Province and an insurgent hub, endured multiple sieges and bombings from 2004-2007, with extensive urban destruction from US operations and IEDs, leading to mass displacement.

The second phase of the War on Terror from around 2013 to 2017, during the Obama years, caused more destruction in Iraq. This period saw the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS, also known as ISIL or Daesh), a terrorist group

that evolved from al-Qaeda in Iraq. The US-led response, under Operation Inherent Resolve (launched in 2014), involved airstrikes, special forces, and coalition support to dismantle ISIS's territorial caliphate. The conflict resulted in massive urban destruction from ISIS occupation, deliberate demolitions, and coalition-backed liberation battles.

One of the most affected cities was **Mosul**, with its Old City nearly obliterated by airstrikes, artillery, and ISIS booby-traps—about 80% of the Old City lay in ruins.[351] **Fallujah**, already affected by previous fighting, saw further destruction, with more than half of its 39,000 homes damaged and about 10,000 of those destroyed or left structurally unsound.[352] In **Ramadi**, fully taken by ISIS in 2015, heavy coalition airstrikes leveled neighborhoods—90% of the city was rendered uninhabitable.[353] Other heavily damaged cities include **Tikrit**, **Sinjar**, and **Tal Afar**. In **Qaraqosh**, the largest Christian town in Iraq, 68 churches were damaged or destroyed,[354] and in **Hatra**, an ancient UNESCO site, ISIS militants armed with sledgehammers and rifles destroyed monuments, statues, and other artifacts.[355]

These are the best known cases, though nearly all major urban areas in Iraq experienced some level of destruction.

"WAR ON HAMAS"

In April 2025, the UN estimated that approximately 92 per cent of all residential buildings in Gaza—around 436,000 homes—have been damaged or destroyed since the start of the conflict.[356] The main difference between the two cases is that while in Iraq the damages were caused by fierce fighting between US and allied forces on one hand and insurgents on the other, limited to areas of engagement, in Gaza the Israeli aim was the total destruction of all civilian infrastructure. There haven't been any battles or street-to-street fights like in Iraq, as Hamas hid in tunnels and was involved in guerrilla-type hit-and-run attacks, so all the damage was caused by deliberate Israeli actions targeting civilian areas. We saw the calls for total annihilation of Gaza, and there is also evidence of the carrying out of this policy.

According to an article in the Israeli news outlet *Ynet*, Netanyahu personally called for indiscriminate bombings at the beginning of the Israeli operation. When Herzi Halevi, the Chief of the General Staff of Israel at the time, presented the cabinet with the IDF's actions in the first 48 hours of the war, he noted that the Air Force had attacked 1,500 targets in Gaza. This is a huge number, requiring exceptional intelligence and operational capabilities, wrote *Ynet*. But Netanyahu erupted in anger, yelling and banging on the table. "Why not 5,000?" he scolded the Chief of Staff. "We don't have 5,000 approved targets," Halevi replied. "I'm not interested in targets," Netanyahu retorted. "Take down houses, bomb with everything you have."[357]

On October 10, IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari admitted that "while balancing accuracy with the scope of damage, right now we're focused on what causes maximum damage."[358]

The destruction was aimed at all aspects of life: health and educational infrastructure, historic and religious sites, water and sewage plants, electricity and fuel facilities, roads, industrial and agricultural areas. Many of these attacks were justified by claiming there was Hamas presence at these sites, but these claims were often proven to be untrue.

When the Al-Shifa Hospital was hit for the first time, Israel said it was because there was a Hamas command center beneath the complex. Indeed there was a bunker; Israel built it itself in 1983, when they still ruled Gaza.[359] It was well known in Israel, but it caught CNN's star reporter Christiane Amanpour by surprise when former PM Ehud Barak told her this fact.[360] But even if there was a bunker, it wasn't used by Hamas, an investigation by *The Washington Post* found.[361] Furthermore, the "evidence" the IDF presented was planted, a BBC Verify report claimed.[362]

The IDF went to a lot of effort to justify the attack on Al-Shifa Hospital, but later bombing **hospitals and medical facilities** became routine: the World Health Organization reported 735 attacks by Israeli forces on healthcare in Gaza from October 7, 2023 to June 11, 2025, killing 917 people and injuring 1,411.[363]

Concerning **educational infrastructure**, the humanitarian organization Save The Children said in April 2024 that "87.7% of all school buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed."[364] Gaza had twelve universities; none survived.[365] In one of the universities, some IDF soldiers proudly burned books in the library.[366]

Historic and religious sites were also destroyed or damaged. The world's oldest active Christian church, Saint Porphyrius Church, was one of the first such cases; on October 19, a shelter annex was destroyed in a strike, killing 18. The Greek Orthodox Church of St. George was also damaged in an airstrike in 2024, destroying altar and frescoes; it was among 12 museums and monasteries hit. The Great Omari Mosque, an 8th-century mosque complex, was hit multiple times, and its minaret and prayer halls collapsed. The Anthedon Archaeological Site, a Roman-era ruins, was bulldozed and bombed in 2025 during buffer zone creation.[367]

Other civilian infrastructure damaged or destroyed include the Gaza Central Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Khan Younis Wastewater Treatment Plant, the Deir al-Balah Pumping Station, and the Rafah Desalination Plant. The Ash Sheikh Radwan Pond and Wells were drained and contaminated, worsening disease spread.[368] The Gaza Power Plant, fuel depots in Deir al-Balah, and the electricity substation in Jabalia were also targeted.[369] By October 2024, 92% of primary roads were destroyed.[370] Even agricultural lands, essential to the production of food, were not spared in Israel's use of starvation as a method of warfare.[371]

"Equivalent to six Hiroshimas," says international affairs expert Paul Rogers about the scale of Israel's bombing in Gaza: "70 kilotonnes of weapons dropped across Gaza – Hiroshima was about 12 kilotonnes, so we are talking about the equivalent of six Hiroshimas... but because these bombs drop individually, they are spread much more, so you get an extraordinary level of devastation."[372] As political scientist Robert Pape pointed out, it is more than the combined bomb tonnage dropped on Dresden, Hamburg, and London in World War II.[373]

But all this destruction couldn't be achieved by aerial bombardments and tank shelling alone. Most of the destruction, in fact, was the result of **systematic demolition** by **planted explosives** or **bulldozers**. The goal was ethnic cleansing, which is not even denied. "We are destroying more and more homes—they have nowhere to return to," Netanyahu reportedly said at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. "The only expected result will be a desire for Gazans to emigrate outside the Strip."[374]

One way to carry out these demolitions is for soldiers to enter the targeted structures to place mines or other explosives, and then leave to pull the trigger from a safe distance. *The New York Times* documented 33 such controlled demolitions that have destroyed hundreds of buildings—including mosques, schools, and entire sections of residential neighborhoods.[375]

But the main weapon in the army's arsenal of destruction is the Caterpillar's D9 armored bulldozer, which has long been used to commit human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories.[376] Several major Israeli infrastructure firms provide services to the Defense Ministry, along with smaller contractors renting out two or three pieces of equipment. The excavators, bulldozers, and huge D9 Caterpillar tractors never stop working, even for a moment; one team can demolish almost 100 buildings in a day.[377]

Another innovative—and indiscriminate—method is using **explosive-laden robots** (remote-controlled APCs) that can destroy around 300 residential units each day.[378]

Many Israelis are proud of this destruction. One of them is Avraham Zarviv, a D9 operator who became known as the "Flattener of Jabalia" for the videos of destruction he uploaded to social media.[379]

Another one is May Golan, the Minister for Social Equality and the Advancement of the Status of Women. In February 2024, during a Knesset debate, she said:

"I am personally proud of the ruins in Gaza and that every baby, even 80 years from now, will tell their grandchildren what the Jews did."[380]

Economic Costs — Trillions Printed From Thin Air

The War on Terror, one of history's costliest military endeavors, has significantly driven up the US deficit through massive borrowing. Israel's conflicts with Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, while far less costly, is damaging its economy, although signs of recovery were noted in 2025. Israel's wars also put further financial strain on the US economy, as it foots a big chunk of the bill. These prolonged conflicts funded by printing trillions may eventually lead to the decline of the American empire—some claim we are already in it.[381]

"WAR ON TERROR"

From 2001 to 2021, the US-led War on Terror cost at least **$8 trillion**, according to Brown University's Costs of War Project. This staggering sum encompasses direct military spending on operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and beyond—totaling $2.3 trillion—plus homeland security enhancements ($1.1 trillion) and future obligations like veterans' care ($2.2 trillion). Indirect costs, such as interest on borrowed funds (projected at $2.1 trillion by 2050), amplify the figure, reflecting how wars financed through deficits balloon national debt.[382] Other analyses push estimates way higher: The Pentagon alone disbursed $14 trillion post-9/11, with up to half—$7 trillion—funneled to for-profit defense contractors like Lockheed Martin and Boeing for weapons, logistics, and reconstruction.[383] These contracts often prioritized profits over efficiency, fueling a military-industrial complex that critics argue perpetuated conflict.

The Institute for Policy Studies tallies over **$21 trillion** spent on "militarization, surveillance, and repression" since 9/11. Beyond the forever wars, the US must fund more than 750 outposts in around 80 countries, with about 220,000 troops stationed permanently abroad, as of June 2021.[384]

"WAR ON HAMAS"

Since October 2023, the Gaza war has become one of the most expensive conflicts in Israel's history. Early estimates by the Bank of Israel and the Finance Ministry put the direct cost of military operations and reconstruction at about NIS 250 billion (**$67 billion**, roughly 13% of GDP).[385] This surge in spending, combined with lower tax receipts, pushed the budget deficit to around 7% of GDP in 2024, and public debt has risen after years of gradual decline.[386] The labor market was also shaken by the war.[387]

Israel's sovereign credit rating was downgraded for the first time ever in February 2024, when Moody's cut Israel from A2 and later again to Baa1, explicitly citing war-related fiscal and security risks and a higher risk premium on Israeli debt.[388] At the same time, the Red Sea crisis has hammered trade routes: Houthi attacks have led to a 90% collapse in activity at Eilat, Israel's only Red Sea port.[389]

Beyond macro indicators, the war has intensified a "brain drain." Israeli media and research bodies report that thousands of high-tech workers have left the country since the war began, prompting warnings about long-term damage to Israel's innovation-driven growth model.[390]

As of late 2025, Israel's economy seems to have rebounded despite the war,[391] driven by its high-tech sector[392] (especially cybersecurity, AI, and other dual-use fields with close ties to defense and surveillance ecosystems[393]), record defense exports,[394] current account surplus and foreign investment.[395] Investors include US Big Tech companies[396] and US states and municipalities buying Israeli bonds.[397]

The US has shouldered a large part of the war effort, providing **$31.35-$33.77 billion** in total spending on the Gaza war and related Middle East operations since October 2023. This includes $21.7 billion in direct support to Israel (military aid, arms transfers, joint operations) and $9.65-$12.07 for US regional activities in Yemen, Iran, and the Wider Middle East Region. Of this, $17.9 billion was allocated under Biden, with $3.8 billion added under the Trump administration by September 2025.[398]

Israel, probably because they fear weakening support, now wants a **20-year military aid contract** with the US, instead of the usual 10-year deal, the last of which will expire in 2028. They are trying to pitch it as "America First," as part of their recent efforts to appeal to the American right.[399]

IMPERIAL OVERSTRETCH

The post-9/11 wars, from Afghanistan to Iraq and beyond, have left an indelible mark on the American economy, pushing the United States deeper into a cycle of debt that echoes the classic trap of imperial overstretch. Coined by historian Paul Kennedy in his 1987 book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*,[400] overstretch occurs when a nation's military ambitions outpace its economic capacity, leading to exhaustion and decline. In the US case, these conflicts were financed almost entirely through borrowing rather than tax hikes or spending cuts. This approach avoided immediate political backlash but saddled future generations with mounting interest payments. By October 2025, the US national debt had surged to a record **$38 trillion**, as reported by the US Treasury, equivalent to roughly $111,000 per person.[401]

Projections from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) paint an even grimmer picture: the debt is expected to climb to $39 trillion by the end of 2025 and exceed $50 trillion by 2033, reaching 118% of GDP—higher than any point in US history and surpassing World War II peaks. This trajectory isn't just numbers on a spreadsheet; it's a symptom of how endless wars have eroded fiscal discipline, forcing the government to print and borrow at unprecedented scales to sustain global military commitments.

Analysts at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a transpartisan think tank advocating restraint in foreign policy, argue that this overreach is a clear signal of imperial decline. Their reports highlight how the US's obsession with military dominance has diverted resources from domestic needs like infrastructure and education. Quincy scholars like Stephen Wertheim[402] warn that this

militarized approach, rooted in the belief that force can impose stability (as seen in the Middle East quagmires), has instead bred instability and hostility, weakening America's global standing.[403] The fiscal drag is already evident, with interest payments alone projected to hit $1.7 trillion annually by 2034,[404] crowding out investments in growth. Consequences loom large: slower GDP expansion, higher taxes or cuts to social programs, and vulnerability to shocks like recessions or geopolitical flare-ups.

At the heart of this vulnerability lies the US dollar's status as the world's **reserve currency**—a privileged position that has long masked the risks of such profligacy. As the reserve currency, the USD is held by central banks worldwide for reserves and used to price global trade, especially commodities like oil. This "exorbitant privilege," as former French president and economist Valéry Giscard d'Estaing called it, allows the US to borrow cheaply and export inflation, since other nations must accumulate dollars to participate in international commerce. In other words, when the US prints trillions for wars, it effectively exports the inflationary burden to everyone else, who absorb the devalued dollars. This policy of creating money is technically called quantitative easing (QE). The dollar's privilege also enables unilateral sanctions, freezing assets of adversaries like Iran or Venezuela.

This financial system relies on trust, and endless wars financed by **fiat money**—currency not backed by physical assets like gold, but by government decree and faith in the economy—amplify the dangers. Fiat money, introduced fully in the US with the Nixon Shock of August 15, 1971, when President Richard Nixon ended the dollar's convertibility to gold under the Bretton Woods system, enables rapid money creation to fund deficits. Until then, the dollar was tethered to gold at $35 per ounce, providing a check on overprinting. Now, with no such anchor, the Federal Reserve can "print from thin air" to cover war costs, but this fuels inflation, currency devaluation, eroding confidence, and vicious debt spirals where interest compounds faster than growth. The IMF has repeatedly warned of these perils: in its 2023 World

Economic Outlook, it highlighted how US fiscal deficits—widening to 8.8% of GDP in 2023 from 4.1% in 2022[405]—were fueling persistent inflation and elevating global interest rates, complicating monetary policy worldwide.[406] By 2024's Fiscal Monitor, the IMF noted global public debt at 93% of GDP, 9 points above pre-pandemic levels,[407] with US overborrowing as a prime culprit, risking a policy trap where deficits exacerbate inflation rather than cushion it.

This fiat-fueled overextension is unsustainable and it's breeding resentment, especially in the Global South. The cracks are widening as the world pushes back: this shift led to the formation of **BRICS** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) in 2009 as an economic forum for emerging powers to counter Western dominance. Originally BRIC (2001 term, South Africa joined 2010), it now boasts 10 full members: the originals plus Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE (joined 2024), and Indonesia (January 2025). Nine partners (de facto observers) joined in January 2025, including Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam—13 invited total, with more expressing interest. BRICS now represents half the world's population and 40% of global GDP (PPP), controlling key commodities like oil and gold.[408]

The catalyst for BRICS' rise was Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, when the West froze $300 billion in central bank reserves, shattering trust in the system. This accelerated **de-dollarization**, with BRICS nations slashing US Treasury holdings[409] and ramping up gold purchases—central banks added 1,045 tons in 2024 alone.[410] Countries started trading in local currencies: Russia-China energy deals in rubles/yuan (nearly 100%),[411] India-Russia oil in rupees,[412] and even US allies like the UAE[413] and Saudi Arabia[414] settling with China in yuan or dirhams. This erodes the petrodollar—the 1974 US-Saudi pact pricing oil in dollars, recycling revenues into US Treasuries, which propped up the USD by ensuring constant demand. Latest developments include Project mBridge, a BIS-led cross-border CBDC platform that several BRICS countries (including China, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia) are using to test direct local-currency settlement,

bypassing dollar-based banking in trade and payments.[415] In December 2025, *IntelliNews* reported on a BRICS proposal for a gold-backed settlement instrument ("The Unit") with a 40% gold/60% currency basket.[416] All these changes are signaling an era's end, shifting power to a multipolar order.

The Biden administration's sanctions frenzy alienated the Global South, while Trump's 2025 return—with tariff threats against almost every country, including allies—further eroded trust, piling on debt via protectionism. De-dollarization has reached a tipping point: it's undeniable, accelerating, and irreversible, birthing a multipolar world where the USD's share in reserves dipped below an unprecedented 57%, down from 71% in 2000.[417]

History offers stark warnings: every empire has succumbed to overstretch. Rome, at its 2nd-century peak spanning three continents, crumbled by 476 CE under barbarian pressures, exacerbated by overextended legions, economic strain from debased currency (fiat-like inflation via coin clipping), and internal decay—echoing US debt and fiat risks. Britain, ruling a quarter of the globe by 1920, overstretched across Asia, Africa, and Europe; two world wars drained its coffers, forcing decolonization by the 1960s amid sterling crises and loss of reserve status to the dollar. Economists like Paul Kennedy[418] and Niall Ferguson[419] see the US on a parallel path: wars sapping vitality, fiat enabling denial, until a rival system forces retrenchment.

A total US collapse is unlikely—the economy's innovation and size provide buffers—but financial weakening will inevitably curb military reach, hopefully ending the era of "forever wars." A more balanced multipolar order could emerge, with shared power fostering stability over hegemony. Yet empires rarely fade quietly; resistance could spark more conflicts, from trade wars to proxy battles and even hot wars, hastening the decline while causing widespread havoc before a new equilibrium sets in. The US must adapt—prioritizing diplomacy over dominance—or risk joining history's overextended ghosts.

Legitimacy Costs — Losing Allies and Sympathizers

In retrospect, it's clear that the War on Terror, particularly the 2003 Iraq invasion, was justified by a series of lies that damaged the credibility of US and UK leadership when it all became known. As civilian casualties grew and legal norms eroded, domestic and international support waned, and public opinion turned against the war's architects. After October 7, Israel had widespread backing from Western politicians, media, and much of society. However, as evidence of repeated war crimes surfaced, even some of Israel's strongest supporters began questioning the legitimacy of its actions. The reputations of those who designed the War on Terror, and of Western politicians and journalists who continue to support Israel's actions unconditionally, have been irreparably harmed.

"WAR ON TERROR"

The cornerstone lie used to justify the invasion of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein possessed active **WMD** programs. In Britain, a September 2002 dossier claimed that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons deployable within "**45 minutes**," presented as evidence of an imminent threat —it rested on flimsy intelligence that some called hearsay.[420] Later evidence also emerged that **Alastair Campbell**, Tony Blair's communications chief, had the dossier changed to fit US claims.[421] **Dr. David Kelly**, a senior government weapons expert, questioned the credibility of the dossier and spoke to a BBC journalist about it. After being publicly identified as the source, he was subjected to intense pressure and scrutiny; he was found dead two days after a parliamentary grilling, which was ruled a suicide—a number of medical professionals doubted[422] and questioned[423] the finding. Then came the February 2003 "**Dodgy Dossier**," also linked to Campbell, which was revealed to be partly plagiarized.[424]

In the US, the **Niger uranium forgery** falsely suggested Iraq sought yellowcake uranium from Africa, based on documents the CIA had already flagged as fake.[425] Another key deception was the alleged **Iraqi ties to al-Qaeda**. The Bush administration pushed a narrative that 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta met Iraqi agents in Prague in 2001, implying Saddam's complicity in terrorism. This was later debunked by the CIA, as no evidence supported the meeting.[426] These suggestions made little sense, as Saddam's secular regime was a mortal enemy of al-Qaeda's jihadist ideology.

These strands converged in **Colin Powell**'s February 2003 UN speech, which cemented the case for war. Powell falsely tied al-Qaeda operative Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to Iraq to suggest Saddam harbored terrorists.[427] He also presented fabricated evidence of mobile biolabs, WMD sites, and chemical stockpiles. Much of it originating from an Iraqi defector named Rafid Ahmed Alwan al-Janabi, codenamed "**Curveball**," a known liar seeking German asylum; he later admitted he fabricated everything to topple Saddam. Powell's team ignored CIA warnings about Curveball's unreliability, and evidence suggests Powell knew the intelligence was shaky but presented it anyway to justify war.[428]

The way the US disregarded international laws and norms further alienated support. Much of the world, and even part of the American public, viewed some US actions as illegal and immoral, such as the indefinite detention without charges of those who were labeled as "unlawful combatants," and the use of torture. The Guantánamo detention center was at the center of it, but the public also learned about the CIA black sites located in different countries where people who had not been charged with a crime were incarcerated and tortured. Then, despite the propaganda, some of the truth started coming out about the large number of civilian casualties and war crimes committed by US and allied forces. As a result, public opinion shifted, and antiwar protests grew in the US, the UK, and globally. Even some allied governments distanced themselves from the US, withdrawing troops or openly opposing Washington's Iraq policy.

"WAR ON HAMAS"

Israel initially enjoyed wide support in the West, but opinions began shifting soon after its invasion of Gaza. Despite denials, gaslighting, and the complicity of most mainstream media, people are aware of Israel's war crimes and indiscriminate actions. In the age of social media, images of dead children, widespread destruction, and IDF soldiers' repulsive conduct reached a broad public. An important point was when the US entered the war against Iran in June 2025, which many even on the traditionally pro-Israel American right saw as not a US conflict.

Opinion polls revealed a stark evolution in US attitudes toward Israel since the Gaza invasion, with deep partisan and generational divides. A July 2025 CNN/SSRS poll found that only 23% of Americans view Israel's military actions in Gaza as "fully justified"—a 27-point plunge from 50% in October 2023, shortly after the Hamas attack. This drop cuts across party lines but is far larger among Democrats and independents. Since 2023, the share of Democrats who say that Israel's actions have been fully justified has dropped from 38% to just 7%, the share among independents from 45% to 14%, and the share among Republicans from 68% to 52%. Younger adults across parties express the most skepticism toward Israel. Only 10% of adults under 35 deem Israel's actions fully justified, while a third say that Israel's actions have not been justified at all. Younger adults are also most likely to say that Israel has used too much military force (61%) and that the US is doing too much to help Israel in its war with Hamas (56%).[429]

Most remarkable is the internal **MAGA rift**, with younger Republicans echoing "America First" isolationism. This view prioritizes domestic revival over foreign entanglements, viewing Gaza as a quagmire draining US resources. Polls show 37% of Republicans now holding unfavorable views toward Israel, up from 27% in 2022.[430] The June 2025 US strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, seen as the US being dragged into war by Netanyahu, amplified this: many MAGA voices decried it as "Israel's war, not ours." They also resent Israeli

meddling in US politics and censorship efforts, including coordinated campaigns to deplatform journalists and activists, and takedowns or suppression of material critical of Israel. Not all have fully "turned against" Israel; most retain anti-Hamas stances, for example, but their criticism signals a pivot from unconditional support to conditional alliance.

Charlie Kirk's September 2025 assassination in Utah exposed these deep rifts. The Turning Point USA (TPUSA) founder, an Israel ally with multiple trips there, had soured privately. Friends say he rejected a massive Netanyahu funding offer to TPUSA, believing it was meant to cow him into silence after he started questioning Israel's influence in Washington. He regarded the Israeli leader as a "bully," and revealed he was 'frightened' by pro-Israel forces.[431] In late 2025, Erika Kirk said that in August, few weeks before his death, some donors asked Charlie: "God forbid if something happens to you, like what would happen next to Turning Point?"[432] Netanyahu's post-assassination video denying involvement only fueled conspiracy theories.

This disillusionment echoes in other influential conservative voices. **Tucker Carlson**, formerly aligned with mainstream pro-Israel GOP positioning, now hosts guests critical of Israel and blasts its foreign sway over Washington. **Candace Owens** has been vocal since 2023, decrying "genocide," leading to her Daily Wire firing. Others who changed heart include British broadcaster **Piers Morgan**, who initially defended Israel's post-Oct 7 response as self-defense, but by mid-2025 started using very critical language, facing backlash from the pro-Israel side for "changing his tune." **Megyn Kelly**, a conservative pundit, warned Israel is "losing standing" globally and criticized the prolonged war.[433]

Former Trump adviser **Steve Bannon** has argued that MAGA's under-30 base has "almost no support" for Israel and has questioned whether US involvement in Gaza aligns with an "America First" agenda. Other critical voices include Rep. **Marjorie Taylor Greene**, who earlier equated the pro-Palestinian stance with being pro-Hamas; but in July 2025 she described Israel's conduct in Gaza as "genocide" and pushed to cut US funding for Israel.[434] In November 2025,

Greene announced her resignation after Trump publicly attacked her—calling her a "traitor" and other insults—and withdrew his support.[435] Israel feels it's loosing support and Netanyahu declared an "8th front": a fight for the "hearts and minds" of young conservative Americans.[436] Zionist media figures started going after critics, **Mark Levin** calling them "Nazis" and "Jew-haters,"[437] while **Ben Shapiro** demanding that everyone cancel those he dislikes. So far the conservative base remains deeply divided;[438] even Vice President **JD Vance** offered an implicit rebuke of Shapiro's stand.[439]

On the left there was always more pro-Palestinian sentiment, but openly defying **AIPAC** (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), the powerful Zionist lobby, was long considered unwise. However, in October 2025, former AIPAC recipient Rep. **Seth Moulton** returned $35,000 and pledged no future ties.[440] Another Democrat, candidate **Bernard Taylor**, vowed after the historic NYC mayoral race: "Mamdani won without a single dollar of AIPAC money. I'll do the same."[441] They echo the "**Reject AIPAC**"[442] and "**Track AIPAC**"[443] voices, signaling the lobby's eroding clout amid Gaza's fallout. AIPAC will use its full power to silence them, time will only tell how this fight unfolds.

Even **pro-Israel rabbis** and other Jewish leaders from around the globe joined the critics. In August 2025, more than 1,000 individuals from Israel, the US, Canada, and Europe signed a public letter denouncing Israel's "mass killings of civilians" and "use of starvation as a weapon" in Gaza, calling it a "terrible assault on Jewish ethics." The signatories clearly stated that they support Israel's battle against Hamas, but they called upon Netanyahu and the Israeli government "to respect all innocent life."[444]

Countries that have openly broken with Israel's war policy include Ireland, Iceland, Spain, and Slovenia; even vehement Israel-supporters such as the UK, Canada, Australia, and France made nominal gestures like recognizing Palestine. Germany couldn't do even this much: although it backed some UN resolutions and imposed arms curbs on Israel, in November 2025 it quietly lifted those restrictions and resumed arms exports.[445]

One of the most damaging fallouts for Israel, however, may come from its brazen **airstrike on Doha**, Qatar, on September 9, 2025. While diplomats and Arab leaders often turn a blind eye to Israel's war crimes, attempting to assassinate a negotiating delegation—invited by Qatar to discuss a US-brokered ceasefire proposal—crossed an unforgivable line in international diplomacy. How can any nation negotiate in good faith with a partner that bombs mediators on neutral ground? This act of bad faith not only exposed Israel's contempt for diplomatic norms but also ignited a rapid backlash across the Muslim world.

Within days, Qatar hosted an extraordinary Arab-Islamic summit, uniting Shia and Sunni leaders—including Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, Iraq's Shia Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and others—in a rare show of solidarity against Israel. The gathering condemned the attack, and there were talks of different ideas. This unity bridged longstanding sectarian divides, framing Israel's actions as a threat to all Muslims.

As a concrete measure, Saudi Arabia and nuclear-armed Pakistan signed a mutual defense pact on September 17, treating any attack on one as an assault on both—and explicitly encompassing "all military means" which could include Islamabad's nuclear arsenal.[446] Longtime allies with deep security ties—Saudi funding helped build Pakistan's nukes—the pact signaled Riyadh's pivot toward a "Sunni bomb" deterrent. Just as important, historic rivals Egypt and Turkey—whose relations sharply deteriorated after Egypt's 2013 coup—launched their first joint naval exercises in 13 years, "Friendship Sea 2025," in the Eastern Mediterranean.[447] The drills projected a unified front, boosting Cairo's profile while countering Israeli and Greek maritime ambitions.

Israel's Doha gamble, meant to decapitate Hamas, instead forged an improbable anti-Israel alliance. How relations will develop still remains to be seen, they are still taking shape.

Security-State & Civil Liberties — The End of the Free World

The post-9/11 era, marked by the War on Terror from September 11, 2001, to the 2021 US withdrawal from Afghanistan, saw the rapid expansion of the US security state, with new laws, agencies, and operations reshaping government power. Developments like these undermined civil liberties, not only in the US but around the entire world. The attack on October 7, likewise, had effects beyond the borders of Israel and Palestine, building on decades of security state buildup and further eroding civil liberties, enhanced by developments in technology.

AFTER 9/11

Expanded Legal Authorities

The War on Terror prompted sweeping legal changes that granted the government unprecedented powers, often at the expense of privacy and due process.

AUMFs (Authorization for Use of Military Force, 2001, 2002): These congressional resolutions authorized military action against terrorism, enabling broad surveillance and detention of suspected terrorists without traditional legal constraints.

USA PATRIOT Act (2001): Enacted weeks after 9/11, this law expanded government surveillance powers, allowing easier access to phone, email, and financial records. The USA PATRIOT Act included the following provisions:

- **FISA/FISC Reforms** (2001): The PATRIOT Act broadened the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) and its court (FISC), streamlining approvals for surveillance of suspected foreign agents and terrorists.

- **Patriot Act Section 213** (Sneak-and-Peek, 2001): This provision permitted delayed-notice search warrants, allowing authorities to search homes or businesses without immediately notifying the target.
- **National Security Letters** (NSLs, 2001, expanded): NSLs enabled the FBI to secretly demand personal data from businesses without judicial oversight, expanding their use significantly post-9/11.
- **Material Support Laws** (2001, expanded): These laws broadened the definition of "material support" for terrorism, criminalizing even indirect aid and raising concerns about free speech.

PRISM (2007-2015): This NSA program collected internet communications directly from tech companies like Google and Apple, enabling mass surveillance. It was exposed by Edward Snowden.

XKeyscore (2008-2015): An NSA tool that analyzed global internet data, allowing analysts to track individuals' online activities without specific warrants.

MUSCULAR (2009-2013): An NSA program that intercepted data flowing between tech companies' overseas data centers, accessing unencrypted communications until halted after public exposure.

NDAA (National Defense Authorization Act, 2012-, annual provisions): Annual NDAAs included provisions allowing indefinite detention of terrorism suspects, raising concerns about due process.

USA FREEDOM Act (2015): After the Snowden revelations, this reform curbed some PATRIOT Act powers, limiting bulk phone metadata collection but maintaining other surveillance authorities.

New and Reorganized Agencies

Post-9/11, the US restructured its security apparatus, creating new agencies and realigning existing ones to prioritize counterterrorism.

FBI Counterterrorism Division (2001, reorganized): The FBI shifted resources to counterterrorism, enhancing its role in domestic surveillance and intelligence gathering.

DHS (Department of Homeland Security, 2002): Created to unify security efforts, DHS consolidated 22 agencies, overseeing immigration, border security, and counterterrorism coordination. The DHS included the following components:

- **TSA** (Transportation Security Administration, 2002): Established to secure airports, the TSA implemented rigorous passenger screening, biometric checks, and no-fly lists.
- **ICE** (Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2002): Formed under DHS, ICE expanded immigration enforcement, detaining and deporting suspected terrorism-related individuals.
- **Watchlists** (Secure Flight/TSDB, 2003-): The Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) tracked suspected terrorists, feeding data to agencies for monitoring and restrictions.
- **No-fly lists** (TSDB integration, 2003-): Integrated with TSDB, these lists barred suspected terrorists from air travel, often without clear recourse for those listed.
- **Screening, biometrics, carrier sanctions** (2002-): DHS and TSA deployed biometric scans and sanctions on airlines to enforce strict border and travel security protocols.

Fusion Centers (2003-): Created to strengthen information flow among federal, state, and local authorities, these hubs centralized data to help identify potential terrorist threats. Over time, their remit broadened to include a wide range of "suspicious activities."

ODNI (Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2004): Established to coordinate the fragmented US intelligence community, ODNI sought to unify efforts across agencies such as the NSA, CIA, and FBI.

Intelligence and Surveillance Operations

The War on Terror expanded surveillance and covert operations, often bypassing traditional oversight to target terrorism at home and globally.

Warrantless Wiretapping (Stellar Wind, 2001-2007): The NSA's Stellar Wind program secretly monitored domestic phone calls and emails without warrants, sparking privacy debates.

SIGINT (Signals Intelligence, 2001-, expanded): The NSA intensified signals intelligence, intercepting global communications to track terrorist networks.

Data-mining, Bulk Collection (2001-2015): Mass data collection programs gathered phone and internet metadata to identify potential threats, often without specific targets.

Five Eyes Intelligence Sharing (2001-, expanded): The US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand deepened global surveillance cooperation to combat terrorism; it allowed members to circumvent domestic laws restricting spying on citizens by relying on partners' collection.

Cybersecurity Operations (NSA's TAO Unit, 2001-2021): The NSA's Tailored Access Operations unit conducted cyber surveillance and hacking to gather intelligence.

Privacy Violations via Tech Companies (2001-): Tech firms shared user data with the government, compromising individual privacy through programs like PRISM.

Other countries had similar measures: in the **UK**, for example, Schedule 7 of the **Terrorism Act**, granted border officials suspicionless powers to examine travelers at ports, airports, and international rail stations. Under the law, anyone can be stopped and questioned without reasonable suspicion, and refusal can lead to arrest, fines, or imprisonment; individuals may be detained, searched (including their luggage and electronic devices, with passwords demanded), and have biometrics such as fingerprints or DNA taken.

AFTER OCTOBER 7

The attack on Israel reverberated across the world, accelerating security-state expansion in many countries as civil liberties eroded through new restrictions, increased surveillance, and fresh legislation. Let's have a look at the post-October 7 situation in different countries and globally.

Israel/Palestine

Israel's post-October 7 response has intensified military operations, emergency powers, and domestic restrictions, prioritizing counterterrorism amid the Gaza war and West Bank escalations. These measures—framed as essential for security—have raised civil liberties concerns, including arbitrary detentions, speech suppression, and erosion of judicial oversight, disproportionately affecting Arabs.

Palestinians in occupied territories always lived in a very oppressive security state with minimal civil liberties, but after October 7 the situation became much worse. The following measures illustrate this deterioration.

More **indefinite detentions, raids, demolitions,** new **checkpoints,** and **closed military zones in the West Bank**: between October 2023 and late 2025, IDF operations killed over 1,000 Palestinians (including 200 children)[448] and arrested around 18,000[449] (3,350 under administrative detention without trial[450]); 2,907 were displaced by demolitions[451] (e.g., punitive home sealings like Udai Tamimi's in January 2024); checkpoints rose from 600 to 900, with new gates/roadblocks restricting movement; closed zones in Jenin/Tulkarem enabled incursions displacing over 40,000,[452] seen as annexationist per UN OCHA.

Enhanced Interrogation and Prison Conditions: Emergency regulations extended detention without counsel to 90 days and imposed collective punishments (e.g., water/electricity cuts); over 10,000 Palestinians held by early 2025, with reports of torture/sexual assault in facilities like Sde Teiman; ICRC access denied post-October 7.

AI-Assisted Target-Selection: The IDF deployed "Lavender"[453] and "Habsora"[454] systems to generate around 100 targets/day, versus 50/year manually, using machine learning on surveillance data; it raised concerns over civilian risks, with Marc Owen Jones, a Durham University professor, calling it "AI-assisted genocide."[455]

Israeli citizens within the state's borders, both Arabs and Jews, were also affected by new and extended measures.

State of Emergency Declaration (October 7, 2023): Immediately after the Hamas attack, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared a nationwide state of emergency under the Basic Law: expanding IDF powers for indefinite detentions, warrantless searches, and resource reallocations.

Judicial Overhaul: The 2023 judicial overhaul—spearheaded by Netanyahu and his far-right coalition—aimed to: let politicians appoint most judges (ending independent panel control); strip the Supreme Court's power to strike down laws using the "reasonableness" standard; and turn Attorney General advice into non-binding opinions. Hundreds of thousands protested weekly before the October 7 attack, fearing it would weaken democracy and shield Netanyahu from corruption trials. The reforms were paused after October 7 for national unity, but resumed and passed in March 2025 (67-1 vote), now framed as wartime necessity. Critics say it's Netanyahu's comeback plan to avoid accountability in his ongoing graft trial, and to consolidate executive power over courts, especially during war crimes probes.

Emergency Powers and Protest Bans: Wartime laws were invoked for arbitrary arrests, chilling free expression; police used facial recognition and dispersal orders, violating assembly rights per human rights groups like Adalah.

Hamas Support Criminalization Amendment: Labeled "thought policing,"[456] the law expanded "persistent consumption of terrorist materials" to include passive viewing of "pro-Hamas" content, leading to 156 arrests of Arab citizens in 2023.[457]

Prohibition of Denial of October 7 Attacks Law: Introduced on January 21, 2025, the law criminalizes denial, minimization, or praise of the October 7 Hamas attack, with penalties of up to five years' imprisonment. Modeled on Holocaust-denial statutes, it has drawn criticism for its broad and imprecise wording, which critics warn could chill academic, journalistic, or historical debate, though no prosecutions have so far resulted.

Military Censorship and Gag Orders: Media required to submit IDF-related stories for pre-approval; 613 articles fully blocked and 2,703 redacted in 2023 (record high),[458] covering operations, intelligence, and rocket impacts; gag orders surged (e.g., on friendly fire), fostering self-censorship and limiting public accountability for war conduct.

Arrests for Social-Media Posts and Campus Speech: A "zero tolerance" policy led to over 400 detentions of Arab citizens for online "incitement"[459] (e.g., sharing Gaza footage or prayers like "no victor but God"); includes high-profile cases like singer Dalal Abu Amneh and student Bayan Khateeb; there were around 80 university cases by late 2023,[460] with forced phone inspections and doxxing, eroding privacy and First Amendment-like protections.

Loosening Gun-Licensing Rules and Civilian Armament: National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir expedited permits, issuing around 230,000 new licenses by 2025[461] via phone interviews and national service volunteers; he distributed thousands of assault rifles to civilian squads in settlements and border towns, including the West Bank; critics argue this fuels settler violence without oversight.

NGO Funding Scrutiny and Anti-BDS Expansion: Knesset bills in 2024 cut funds to "Hamas-sympathizing" groups and barred entities involved in BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) from public tenders; many NGOs were affected, raising associational freedoms issues.

Entry Ban for Deniers (February 23, 2025): This measure extended the denial law to bar "October 7 deniers" from Israel; passed 12-0, but critics fear overreach on speech for activists/journalists.

United States

The US response to the October 7 Hamas attack has amplified domestic security measures, including new laws, expanded surveillance, censorship, intimidation, and visa revocations. Zionist groups such as the **ADL** pushed for labeling all criticism of Israel as antisemitic, based on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (**IHRA**) definition which conflates legitimate criticism of Israel with antisemitism. By 2025, the IHRA definition had been adopted by 37 US states, 15 of which had written it directly into state law.[462] These actions, often justified as countering extremism, have drawn criticism for chilling free speech, targeting pro-Palestinian (or even "America First") activism, and enabling tech-driven monitoring.

Heightened Threat Environment Alerts: DHS/FBI issued immediate bulletins warning of FTO-inspired violence post-attack; expanded monitoring of pro-Palestinian groups led to a surge in federal inquiries and assessments, including bulk data collection on Muslim and Jewish communities, echoing post-9/11 profiling and raising privacy concerns.

FISA Section 702 Surveillance Expansion: Post-attack, agencies ramped up warrantless data collection under Section 702 for counterterrorism; reauthorized in April 2024 via RISAA with minimal reforms, enabling millions of US person queries annually, including on domestic extremism tied to protests, without warrants.

FBI Domestic Extremism Probes: Threat reports and public tips spurred expanded intelligence gathering through Fusion Centers; probes increasingly focused on pro-Palestinian activists, raising concerns over overreach on nonviolent speech.

Visa Revocations for "Hamas Supporters": The State Department screened large numbers of visa applicants for social media "hostile attitudes"; ACLU lawsuits challenged the policy as violating First Amendment protections, chilling immigrants' expression and resulting in widespread visa denials and revocations tied to political speech.

Immigration and Security Policy Changes: Enhanced vetting was imposed on Palestinian refugees and migrants, with deportations and removals justified on grounds of "imported antisemitism," undermining due process.

Congressional Resolutions Equating Anti-Zionism with Antisemitism: H.Res. 894 condemned post-attack antisemitism surge and declared "anti-Zionism is antisemitism"; the resolution passed 311–14, with a significant number of Democrats voting "present" or "no," citing free-speech concerns.

Antisemitism Awareness Act: In May 2024, the House passed it 320–91, codifying the IHRA definition for Title VI enforcement; its application on university campuses triggered investigations and disciplinary actions, resulting in event bans and firings, blurring criticism of Israel with hate speech.

Project Esther: Heritage Foundation blueprint that labeled pro-Palestinian groups a "Hamas Support Network"; influenced Trump admin policies like funding cuts to NGOs and Wikipedia editor targeting, conflating activism with terrorism and chilling speech.

Campus Crackdowns: More than 2,000 arrests[463] (e.g., Columbia, UCLA); police raids with excessive force (e.g., zip ties, rubber bullets) at schools; presidents at Harvard and Penn resigned amid donor pressure and congressional hearings on "antisemitism."

AI-Assisted Social-Media Reviews: "Catch and Revoke" initiative used AI to scan student visas for "pro-Hamas" posts post-October 7; thousands were flagged, leading to revocations/deportations, with ACLU decrying algorithmic bias against Arab voices.

Joint Task Force October 7 (JTF 10-7): DOJ-led task force prosecuted 10 Hamas-linked individuals in the US, but expanded to probe "Hamas sympathizers," including arrests for "celebrations," raising due process issues.

NSPM-7 (National Security Presidential Memorandum-7): Not directly targeting pro-Palestinian voices, it directed Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) to probe "anti-American" views as domestic terrorism; it has been condemned as McCarthyist overreach on speech.

United Kingdom

The October 7 attack triggered a sharp escalation in UK security measures, framed as countering antisemitism and extremism. From using the IHRA definition to suppress anti-Zionist speech, updating counter-extremism strategies to monitor pro-Palestinian activism, expanding protest policing powers, misusing anti-terrorism laws, and intensifying online speech policing, these policies have curtailed assembly, expression, and privacy—often disproportionately targeting Muslim and pro-Palestinian voices.

Antisemitism Definition Expansion: As in other countries, the conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism —through adoption of the IHRA definition in universities— led to event cancellations and firings over "hostile" Gaza criticism, blurring anti-Zionism with hate speech.

Counter-Extremism Strategy Updates: Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP), MI5, and local forces monitoring FTO calls; over 400 people arrested for offenses linked to the Israel-Hamas conflict labeled "hate crime."[464]

Secret Services Surveillance: UK secret services like MI5 and GCHQ have ramped up covert monitoring of pro-Palestinian activism under counterterrorism frameworks, often via the Prevent program and Joint Terrorism Analysis Center (JTAC), which assessed these groups as potential threats despite noting most activities weren't terrorism. MI5's domestic surveillance, including signals intelligence from GCHQ, has targeted activists' communications and associations, with reports of over 100 school referrals for displaying support for Palestine.[465] This echoes historical MI5/GCHQ bulk data collection (ruled partly unlawful in 2015), now applied to "extremism" probes amid a skyrocketing rise in referrals.

Expanded Protest Policing Powers: Public Order Act amendments for demonstrations; Police expanded live facial recognition deployments (e.g., Met Police/South Wales pilots) at large events and transport hubs, with mass arrests at marches and dispersal orders limiting assembly.

Anti-Terrorism Laws: Old laws and new amendments used and abused, such as Terrorism Act of 2000 and 2006, Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act, and more. Here are a few notable cases.

Freelance reporter Richard Medhurst was arrested at Heathrow in August 2024; his phone and kit were seized, drawing concern from the UK journalists' union (NUJ/IFJ).[466] In October 2024, counterterrorism police raided the home of *Electronic Intifada* editor Asa Winstanley and seized his electronics; in May 2025, a UK court ordered police to return all devices.[467] In Sept 2025, George Galloway MP and his wife were detained for hours at Gatwick by counterterrorism police, who confiscated their devices.[468]

Palestine Action Terror Designation: The non-violent pro-Palestinian group was labeled a terrorist organization in 2025; now, holding a sign in support of the group is illegal. There were big protests against the designation, with mass arrests; as of October 2025, at least 2,094 people have been arrested for expressing support for Palestine Action. This includes major events like 522 arrests on August 9,[469] 857 on September 6,[470] and nearly 500 on October 4,[471] often for holding signs like "I oppose genocide—I support Palestine Action." Of those arrested, 138 have been charged so far.[472]

Policing of online speech: UK policing of online speech primarily falls under the Terrorism Act 2000, Communications Act 2003, Malicious Communications Act 1988, and the Online Safety Act 2023. These laws enable arrests for posts deemed "supporting terrorism," "offensive communication," "hate speech," or "misinformation," often without clear thresholds, leading to around 30 arrests per day for offensive online messages—12,183 arrests in 2023 alone![473] (2024-2025 data is not available.) On top, thousands were investigated or searched, devices seized. These laws were applied "both ways," not only targeting pro-Palestinian but also anti-Muslim sentiments. In all fairness, if a comment is not a direct incitement, a "liberal democracy" upholding the principles of free speech should tolerate it; this level of online policing is excessive and dangerous for democracy.

European Union

The October 7 Hamas-led attack prompted the EU to expand counterterrorism and anti-hate measures. These responses—via sanctions, content regulations, and funding scrutiny—have often restricted pro-Palestinian activism, conflating criticism of Israel with extremism and leading to protest bans, NGO defunding, and speech curbs.

Pro-Palestinian Protest Bans: At least 12 countries banned or restricted solidarity rallies citing "public order/security," using excessive force in hundreds of events; Palestinian flags/keffiyehs prohibited, violating ECHR assembly rights per Amnesty/HRW.

Terrorist Content Online (TCO) Regulation Enforcement: Platforms mandated to remove Hamas-related content under DSA/TCO, leading to thousands of deletions but vague definitions chilling Gaza criticism; tied to broader speech curbs on pro-Palestinian posts.

Digital Services Act (DSA) Enforcement: Applied to online "hate speech" and disinformation, fining platforms for non-compliance and amplifying TCO; suppression of pro-Palestinian content amid IHRA conflations.

EU Strategy on Combating Antisemitism Progress: IHRA adoption in institutions blurred anti-Zionism with hate, causing cultural/academic event cancellations and firings across the European Union.

Funding Restrictions to Palestinian NGOs: EU Commission and states (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland) suspended/reviewed millions in aid to Palestinian/Israeli civil society over "terror diversion" allegations, adding "anti-incitement" clauses and third-party monitoring; Amnesty and 99 NGOs called it discriminatory, eroding human rights protections.[474]

The **EU sanctions European citizens** for exercising their free speech rights (not necessarily related to Palestine), such as Hüseyin Doğru[475] and Col Jacques Baud,[476] in order to silence them, while hypocritically claiming that "freedom of speech is the foundation of European democracy."[477]

Germany

EU member Germany deserves a separate mention because of the country's Nazi past. Germans' collective guilt makes their politicians support Israel unconditionally, even if it means being on the wrong side of history again and complicit in another genocide. Obedience to Israel is written into their law: called **Staatsräson** ("state reason"), it says Israel's security is a German national interest. It drove bans, detentions, and brutal crackdowns, often against Jews, evoking unsettling historical parallels.

The Bundestag's "**Never Again is Now**" Resolution mandated IHRA adherence for public funding and withheld grants from BDS supporters and Israel critics; the conflation of anti-Zionism with hate resulted in firings, event bans, and a chilling of speech. Even former Greek finance minister, **Yanis Varoufakis**, was barred not only from entering the country but also from speaking via video at events hosted in Germany.[478] Bans were introduced on Palestinian symbols, "from the river to the sea" was deemed a Hamas slogan.

Police used water cannons, dogs, and excessive force at rallies, or banned the protests altogether. Face-Recognition Trials were conducted in Berlin and Stuttgart for protest monitoring, raising privacy concerns. UN experts urged Germany to halt **decriminalization and police violence** against Palestinian solidarity activism.[479] Even Jewish personalities have expressed concern in an open letter signed by more than 150, claiming Germany's resolutions "to protect Jewish life" are focusing on the wrong people.[480]

Countless arrests were made for **"hate speech" posts** (e.g., comparing Israel to Nazis), and house searches were also conducted for pro-Palestine content, under the Network Enforcement Act.

New naturalization laws require applicants to sign a "loyalty oath to the State of Israel," declaring its "right to exist,"[481] disqualifying applicants for "antisemitism" (e.g., BDS support). An unknown number of migrants were deported for "imported antisemitism" posts.

A global threat

Zooming out of individual countries, you can see a threat on a global level. The mostly US-based big tech companies affect the whole world, not only the American public. Most of them have Israeli ties; in many cases former IDF spies are placed in key positions at these American businesses, or they work with the Israeli government or companies. There are many solely Israeli tech startups as well, based all around the world; often they consist of former IDF cyber specialists, and many are set up by or jointly with the IDF's Unit 8200 or similar cyber or intelligence groups. Many of these Israel-linked tech companies work hand-in-hand with Western governments, but also with oppressive regimes, to help them spy on their citizens. They are a threat to free speech around the world, while Gaza-tested surveillance apps and gadgets may already monitor us.

Censorship—Free speech is at the core of Western democracies, and censorship is against its principles. Yet, this is happening at all the big tech companies.

Meta/Facebook has censored pro-Palestinian content on Facebook and Instagram since October 7, 2023, complying with 94% of Israel's takedown requests. Often under "terrorism" or "incitement" labels, millions of removals occurred globally; this is driven by over 100 former IDF soldiers and Israeli spies employed at Meta, including AI policy head Eden Anderson (ex-IDF AI specialist), who leverage hasbara-style tactics to train moderation AI on pro-Israel biases.[482]

TikTok appointed Erica Mindel, "former IDF soldier and proud Zionist,"[483] as hate speech policy manager in July 2025, under pressure from US lawmakers and Jewish advocacy groups (e.g., ADL), with the aim to curb pro-Palestine content. Zionist billionaire Larry Ellison, through his company Oracle, will take a 15% stake in TikTok's US joint venture,[484] further cementing the pro-Israeli grip on the company.

YouTube has formal content-policy partnerships with the ADL and suppresses pro-Palestinian content, with algorithmic de-amplification and removals, including shadowbans and over-moderation of videos. At the end of 2025, YouTube quietly erased more than 700 videos documenting Israeli human rights violations.[485]

Google, YouTube's parent company, provides search results that favor Israeli narratives, and along with Amazon it is involved in Project Nimbus, a $1.2B 2021 cloud/AI contract with Israel to provide computing infrastructure for surveillance, facial recognition, and data storage for the Israeli government and military.[486]

Microsoft platform LinkedIn removed posts and restricted accounts of Palestinian professionals and academics discussing Gaza war crimes. Microsoft's Bing has been accused of deprioritizing pro-Palestinian search results, with algorithmic tweaks favoring Israeli sources. Its Azure cloud and AI services enabled Israel's Unit 8200 mass surveillance of Palestinian calls until Microsoft terminated access in September 2025 following Guardian exposés.[487]

X (formerly **Twitter**), despite Elon Musk's branding it as the "most free speech" platform, has engaged in selective censorship of anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian content since October 7, including shadowbanning, suspending hundreds of Palestinian accounts and activists, and demonetizing creators critical of Israel, per reports from 7amleh.[488]

PayPal has partnered with the ADL, and permanently froze accounts of Palestinian aid organizations, independent journalists, and activists (e.g., Samidoun, Lowkey) without explanation, effectively cutting off their funding.[489]

What's coming: at the start of 2026, Israeli cybersecurity billionaire Shlomo Kramer said it out explicitly on CNBC: "it's time to **limit the First Amendment**… we need to control the platforms, all the social platforms. … if China has a single narrative that protects its inner stability and the U.S. allows for multiple narratives, it puts them in an unfair advantage that long-term is going to cost the stability of the nation. So changes must be made."[490]

Surveillance—Here, too, many US tech companies have Israeli ties, and Israeli groups such as Unit 8200 are also involved in startups in the Silicon Valley[491] and globally. Spy tech developed by former Israeli spies is being used on an industrial scale by various agencies in Western democracies, from police forces to national security agencies to militaries. Some has been declared illegal, some skirts legal boundaries, and much remains hidden.

Palantir, surveillance company co-founded by Peter Thiel, is heavily used by the US government (e.g., ICE, DHS, IRS, DoD) and its Western allies for surveillance, integrating data from biometrics, social media, taxes, and license plates into AI profiles for tracking citizens; it "spies" by enabling real-time predictive policing and mass data fusion via Gotham/Foundry platforms, raising privacy fears. In January 2024, Palantir signed a "strategic partnership" with Israel's Ministry of Defense to supply operational software and AI tools "to help the country's war effort."[492] Several critical reports say this tech has been used in AI-driven targeting systems that help generate bombing targets in Gaza, raising concerns about war-crimes liability.[493]

Oracle, co-founded by Larry Ellison, provides surveillance tools like Endeca for predictive policing and data analytics to US agencies (e.g., DHS, DoD) and other countries; it hosts AI-driven monitoring of social media/protests, enabling facial recognition and behavior tracking, merging records like visas and financial data. Ellison is one of the largest private donors to Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF),[494] and Oracle runs cloud infrastructure in Israel and works closely with Israeli defense and cyber-security ecosystems populated by Unit 8200 veterans. Its underground data center in Jerusalem was designed to be resilient to security threats.[495]

Israeli spyware companies got in trouble in the past, such as **NSO Group** for its Pegasus software, and several were blacklisted by the US government, but the business is thriving. Many lesser known companies exist, as listed on the Substack publication *¡Do Not Panic!* by Nate Bear.

Israeli spy firm, **Paragon Solutions**, was identified in 2025 as silently infiltrating and extracting data from WhatsApp, Signal, Messenger and Gmail without needing user interaction. A criminal complaint against Paragon was filed in Rome after an Italian journalist was hacked by the Italian government using Paragon software. The company, founded by Unit 8200 commanders and advised by former Israeli prime minister, Ehud Barak, has not been blacklisted by the EU or the US and remains free to operate.

Cellebrite, another Israeli tech company, was founded by an ex-IDF soldier and staffed with dozens of ex-Unit 8200 Israeli intelligence personnel. Its flagship tool is called the Universal Forensic Extraction Device which extracts data including contacts, locations, deleted messages, and calls from a range of devices including smartphones, pads, SIM cards, and GPS devices. The company has contracts with US and European governmental agencies.

Arguably even more sophisticated tools are offered by Israeli spy tech firm **Cobwebs Technologies**, founded by former IDF Unit 8200 officers. Among the services offered is an AI-powered program enabling facial and image recognition across social media and the deep web, and a feature called WebLoc that enables the tracking of mobile phone movements in a specific area. The company works with US and UK government organizations.

Another Israeli spy tech firm, **Cognyte**, makes "network intelligence" tools that hoover up huge quantities of information, including anything running through 4G/5G towers, telecom metadata, messaging platforms, phone calls and network signals, to spot patterns and anomalies in communications. It is kept secret who exactly the company works with, but they include Western security services, police forces and government agencies.

The company that Cognyte span out of, **Verint**, is also founded by former intelligence officers and has also worked with Western security agencies. Verint built Switzerland's wiretap and surveillance infrastructure, and it worked for the US Department of Defense as well as the UK police.

Another Israeli company that has partnered with British police forces is **Corsight AI** which has sold its facial recognition technology to the Essex Police. Corsight's software, which enables the identification and cross referencing of people's faces, was perfected first on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Israeli facial recognition company, **Briefcam**, also has contracts with UK police forces as well as police departments in the US. In France, Briefcam had its contracts canceled in 2023 after it was revealed scores of police forces across the country were using them illegally in breach of French privacy laws. Police in Belgium and Poland also use Corsight facial recognition.

NICE, another Israeli company founded by ex-IDF soldiers, has also provided surveillance tools for cities including license plate recognition, face capture, as well as hand held GPS-based video terminals and mobile video sensors to track citizens.[496]

Skydio is a US drone manufacturer, not an Israeli company, but they battle-tested their drones in Gaza and now these AI-powered quadcopters patrol the skies in several American cities.[497] It's an example of how global arms corporations benefit from wars and occupation in Palestine.

Certain **Samsung** smartphone series, it was revealed in late 2025, come with a pre-installed Israeli spyware which virtually cannot be removed.[498]

What this compendium demonstrates, concludes Nate Bear, is that Israel sits at the center of the drive toward a fully surveilled, zero-dissent world, ushering in a distinct 21st century fascism that fuses new technologies of control to a tried-and-tested framework that seeks to spy, suppress and dominate.[499]

And if you don't like this vision, you might get blown up remotely, former Mossad head Yossi Cohen suggested. Electronic appliances in "every country you can imagine" are compromised, like the pagers in Lebanon, he boasted on camera;[500] true or not, it is an explicit threat to everyone in the world.

A Shared Vision: Greater Israel and Hegemony

Just two weeks before the October 7 attack, Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a speech at the UN General Assembly in New York, brandishing a map of what he promised could be the "New Middle East." It depicted a state of Israel that stretched continuously from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Gaza and the West Bank, as Palestinian lands, were erased.[501]

This is the political Greater Israel vision, often justified by biblical claims, even by Zionists who don't believe in God. Israel has now extended its presence in south Lebanon and Syria, but some religious Zionist radicals want even more. Their scriptural anchor is the promise to Abraham—"from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates"—which they read as a geographic charter. This expansive region includes modern-day Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan, and parts of Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. Often it is openly admitted, and you can see plenty of photos on social media with the map of Greater Israel on logos and military patches.[502]

Greater Israel has another geopolitical aspect: Israel's undisputed and total hegemony in the Middle East. This aspiration, part of the broader Abraham Accords vision, perfectly aligns with the vision of US neoconservatives: they see it as part of US global hegemony. Neocon and Zionist dreams converge: Greater Israel, weakened Iran, Arab states following orders; the US gets a foothold in the Middle East, Israel gets unconditional support from the US.

A critical view that is gaining popularity claims Israel controls the US, or at least its foreign policy; others argue that it is the other way around, or that they are "joined at the hip." However it is, neocons and Zionists are very much allied on Middle East issues. They came a long way: first united after Israel's Six-Day War in 1967, then taking full control of US politics after 9/11, and holding firm ever since. One of their projects is to reshape the Middle East.

Palestinians (including Yasser Arafat[503]) and Arabs in general often claim the two blue lines on the Israeli flag represent the two rivers mentioned in the biblical reference. Senior Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar even demanded Israel change its flag.[504] Mainstream scholarship and Israeli sources reject this assumption, noting that early Zionist flag designs explicitly drew on the *tallit*'s (prayer shawl) blue stripes.[505] The flag of the World Zionist Organization, first presented at Basel in 1897, consisted of two light blue stripes with a Star of David in between, very similar to today's Israeli flag.[506]

Even if the claim is not true, the idea is very fitting, reflecting exactly what many believe in inside Israel. And maybe this design was meant to have a double meaning, leaving it up to one's interpretation. If one can find the slogan "from the river to the sea" offending, based on their interpretation of these words, then others have the right to be offended by how they interpret the Israeli flag. Otherwise "from the river to the sea" is an official Likud policy—this is exactly how it was stated in its founding charter in 1977: "Between the Sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty."[507] On the other hand, in the pro-Palestinian sense, most people believe their slogan means one country where everyone is free and has equal rights—Palestinian, Jewish, Christian, Druze, Armenian, and whoever lived there for centuries.[508]

Two-State Solution — A Reverse Narrative

When it comes to Palestinian statehood, Western governments and the mainstream media's official narrative is that the Palestinians were offered a state many times but they always refused to accept it. However, if we look at the issue more closely, it becomes clear that actually the opposite is true. Let's see how Palestinians lost their lands, and how they would have accepted even humiliating peace deals, but Israel always wanted everything.

1947, UN Partition Plan (Resolution 181): The UN proposed dividing Mandatory Palestine into Jewish (56%) and Arab (43%) states, with Jerusalem internationalized. Palestinians rejected it as unfair, given Jews owned 7% of the land and were 33% of the population. A civil war followed.

1948, Arab-Israeli War/Nakba: Israel declared independence on May 14; Arab states invaded. By war's end, Israel controlled 78% of Mandatory Palestine (up from 56%). Around 700,000-750,000 Palestinians (80% of the Arab population in Israeli-held areas) were displaced amid massacres like Deir Yassin. Palestinians retained control of 22% of historic Palestine: the West Bank (under Jordan) and Gaza (under Egypt).

1967, Six-Day War: Israel preemptively struck Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, capturing the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, and Golan Heights in six days. A further 300,000 Palestinians fled to neighboring countries, while UN Resolution 242 called for Israeli withdrawal to pre-war "Green Line" borders (78/22%), but Israel never complied.

1987-1993, First Intifada: Israeli settlements expanded from 100,000 to 250,000 settlers, fragmenting Palestinian land (effective control dropped below 22% viable territory).

Palestinians rose up against the occupation, resulting in around 1,000 Palestinian deaths. Palestinian resistance ended with Oslo talks.

1988, PLO recognition of Israel: Under Yasser Arafat, the PLO declared independence, accepted UN Resolution 242, recognized Israel's right to exist on 1967 borders, and renounced terrorism—key concessions for a two-state solution in exchange for 22% of historic Palestine. Israel and the US initially rejected it as insincere.

1993, Oslo Accords: Secret Norwegian-brokered talks led to mutual recognition: the PLO accepted Israel's existence and renounced violence; Israel recognized the PLO as the Palestinian representative. The Palestinian Authority (PA) was established for limited self-rule in parts of the West Bank and Gaza. However, Israeli settlements continued expanding, eroding trust.

1995, Oslo II Agreement: It divided the West Bank into Areas A (PA civil/security, 18%), B (PA civil, Israeli security, 22%), and C (full Israeli control, 60%). Intended as interim, it instead entrenched a fragmented geography, incorporating settlements and military zones, preventing territorial continuity for a future Palestinian state.

1995, assassination of Yitzhak Rabin: Israeli Prime Minister Rabin, Oslo architect, was killed by a Jewish extremist who opposed land concessions as "betrayal." Rabin's death halted momentum; it symbolized the rise of Israeli right-wing opposition to peace, leading to Likud's 1996 election win under Netanyahu and stalled negotiations.

1997, Sheikh Yassin truce offer: Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin affirmed the possibility of a truce with Israel, though the terms he set included full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the removal of all Jewish settlements. "Israel has never taken these offers seriously."[509]

2000, Camp David Summit and Second Intifada: US-brokered talks under Clinton collapsed; Arafat rejected Barak's offer as non-viable: 91% of the West Bank but with settlement annexations and no East Jerusalem capital. Sharon's Temple Mount visit sparked the Second Intifada (2000-2005), killing 3,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis. A further settlement boom followed; Palestinian effective land control shrank due to walls/barriers.

2001, Netanyahu's sabotage admission: In a video secretly recorded in 2001, incoming PM Netanyahu told settlers he deliberately undermined Oslo by dragging out talks and expanding settlements to prevent Palestinian statehood. (A bit more about his admission comes right after this list.) It confirmed the strategy of using negotiations as cover for unilateral actions.

2002, Arab Peace Initiative: In a Saudi-led proposal, Arab states offered full normalization with Israel in exchange for withdrawal to 1967 borders, a Palestinian state, and a just refugee solution. Endorsed by Arafat and the PA, but Israel under Sharon dismissed it, prioritizing security over concessions.

2005, Israeli disengagement from Gaza: Under Ariel Sharon, Israel unilaterally withdrew settlers and troops from Gaza (evacuating 8,500 settlers) but retained control of borders, airspace, and sea—effectively turning Gaza into an "open-air prison." Framed as goodwill for peace, critics say it allowed a focus on West Bank annexation while enabling a full blockade of Gaza.

2006, Hamas election victory: Hamas won Palestinian legislative elections and formed a government, but faced an international boycott. The PA (Fatah-led under Abbas) split: Gaza came under Hamas control after 2007 clashes. Despised from left and right, billionaire George Soros expressed his surprisingly positive take on the Hamas win in a 2007 article.[510]

2007, Annapolis Conference and settlement surge: Abbas proposed 1967 borders with swaps, but in 2009 Netanyahu conditioned the two-state solution on demilitarization and full Israeli security control, while settlements tripled (700,000+ settlers by 2023). The PA continued recognizing Israel and negotiating, but effective Palestinian land decreased below 10% due to fragmentation.

2014, Kerry Peace Framework: US Secretary John Kerry proposed a framework which Abbas accepted with reservations, but Israel under Netanyahu rejected core elements like a settlement freeze. Talks collapsed.

2017, Hamas accepts state with 1967 Borders: Hamas's 2017 document conditionally accepted a state on the 1967 borders via referendum as "national consensus," without recognizing Israel—echoing the PLO's 1988 stance but as a *hudna* (truce). Israel rejected it, citing refusal to disarm/recognize.

2020, Abraham Accords: The US-brokered normalization between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan ignored the Palestinian issue, sidelining the two-state solution. Abbas condemned it as betrayal.

2025, current state: Palestinian-inhabited areas across Gaza and the West Bank make up about 15-18% of the land, but these areas are not contiguous; in practical, continuous territorial terms, Palestinians effectively control only around 7%. In Gaza, Palestinians are now confined to 47% of the strip (as of November 2025),[511] with large buffer zones under Israeli military control. In East Jerusalem, Palestinians have 0% territorial authority, despite living there. In the West Bank, Areas A/B/C percentages remained similar on paper, but the usable Palestinian space inside A and B shrank due to settlement expansion, Israelis-only roads, firing zones, and restricted-access areas. The result is around 165 isolated Palestinian enclaves, often compared to Bantustans under Apartheid South Africa.

Perhaps the most successful person at preventing peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state is Benjamin Netanyahu. He admitted it privately and boasted about it openly; yet, in mainstream narratives this fact is always omitted, and the Palestinians are blamed for not accepting peace offers. US presidents who worked with Netanyahu know better: they also came to the conclusion that Netanyahu was the obstacle to peace.

Netanyahu explaining on camera in 2001 how he will sabotage the Oslo peace accords

In a video from 2001, Netanyahu—who did not know his speech was being recorded—speaks frankly in Hebrew about relations with America and the peace process.

As noted in *Haaretz*, Netanyahu seems to boast of his ability to manipulate the US by saying:

> "I know what America is. America is a thing you can move very easily, move it in the right direction. They won't get in the way."[512]

He also talks about how he intends to sabotage any peace process while pretending he abides by it, and to continue land theft, as *The Washington Post* revealed:

> "They asked me before the election if I'd honor [the Oslo accords]. I said I would, but ... I'm going to interpret the accords in such a way that would allow me to put an end to this galloping forward to the '67 borders. How did we do it? Nobody said what defined military zones were. Defined military zones are security zones; as far as I'm concerned, the entire Jordan Valley is a defined military zone. Go argue."[513]

The video was broadcast in 2010 on a TV program called "This Week With Miki Rosenthal," titled "The Real (And Deceitful) Face of Benjamin Netanyahu."[514]

Carter: Hamas wanted peace, Netanyahu rejected it

The former US president Jimmy Carter in 2015 said Hamas was prepared to accept Israel's right to "live as a neighbour next door in peace." He was speaking after meeting Khaled Meshal, an influential Hamas leader, in Damascus. The former president insisted Hamas would not undermine efforts by the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, to reach a peace deal with Israel. Hamas believed any peace agreement negotiated by Abbas would have to be submitted to the Palestinian people in a referendum, he added. "There's no doubt that both the Arab world and Hamas will accept Israel's right to exist in peace within 1967 borders," Carter said.[515] However, in another interview he said Netanyahu "does not now and has never sincerely believed in a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine."[516]

Even Trump realized Netanyahu never wanted peace

In 2021, Donald Trump accused Benjamin Netanyahu of deceiving him and his administration about his sincerity in making a peace deal with the Palestinians.

"Bibi did not want to make a deal," said Trump. "Even most recently when we came up with the maps and everything he said, 'this is good, this is good,' everything was always great but he did not want to make a deal. I thought the Pals were impossible and the Israelis would do everything to make peace and a deal. I found that not to be true."

"I don't think Bibi ever wanted to make peace, I think he tapped us along, just tapped, tapped, tapped... Bibi did not want to make peace, never did," Trump stated.[517]

"From the River to the River" — What Was Promised to the Jews?

When Hashem (God) promised Abraham—called Avram in the Torah—the Land of Israel in the "Covenant Between the Parts" (*Brit Bein HaBetarim*), the Torah says:

> On that day Hashem made a covenant with Avram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.'
> — Bereishit / Gen. 15:18

This moment marks one of the most fundamental promises in the entire Torah. Avram (later renamed Avraham, meaning "father of many nations") was chosen by Hashem to begin a new spiritual lineage founded on faith, justice, and ethical monotheism. The promise was not only personal—it was a covenant between God and Abraham's descendants, who would later become the people of Israel.

The phrase "to your descendants" (*l'zaracha*) traditionally refers to the line of Abraham through Isaac (Yitzhak) and Jacob (Yaakov), whose children became the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The land boundaries—"from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates"—symbolize the full extent of the territory divinely designated for this nation, though Jewish commentators differ on whether these borders are intended for the messianic future or to be retaken by force in our lifetime.

In the classical religious non-Zionist view, this covenant represents far more than a territorial grant. It's a spiritual and moral bond: the land is given conditionally, tied to the people's commitment to divine law and righteousness. Possession of the land, therefore, is understood not as a right of conquest but as a future fulfillment—a sacred trust, a partnership between God and Israel (the Israelites) that carries both privilege and responsibility.

From this perspective, the idea of a political "Greater Israel promised by God" is profoundly misused and against God's will. The covenant with God is conditional on righteousness and obedience, not as a political land deed to be claimed by human force. Only the Messiah, not secular leaders or modern states, has divine authority to restore Jewish sovereignty. Attempting to seize or expand territory in God's name before that time is seen as a violation of the divine order and of the Talmudic oaths forbidding Jews to "storm the wall" (return en masse). True faith, they argue, lies in Torah observance, humility, and peace, not in nationalist conquest falsely wrapped in religious justification.

Religious Zionists view it differently. They see the modern return to the Land of Israel and the founding of the state as the beginning of the divine redemption, a fulfillment —at least in part—of God's ancient promise to Abraham. In their eyes, human action to reclaim and rebuild the land is not defiance but participation in God's plan, preparing the way for the Messiah rather than waiting passively for him. Many literally believe they have to take the land from the Nile to the Euphrates, step by step.

Secular Zionists also believe they have a God-given right to the land; they just don't believe God exists. They want at least the Palestinian lands of the West Bank, always referred to as "Judea and Samaria," and Gaza, plus what Israel has already annexed from Syria and Lebanon. A famous quote from David Ben-Gurion, a socialist Zionist who didn't believe in a biblical creator, shows perfectly this secular Zionist hypocrisy: "If I were an Arab leader, I would never sign an agreement with Israel. It is normal; we have taken their country. It is true God promised it to us, but how could that interest them? Our God is not theirs. … They see but one thing: we have come and we have stolen their country. Why would they accept that?"[518]

Both religious and secular Zionists saw an opportunity in the war in Gaza to expand the land, and some were already eyeing property in Lebanon.

'Lebanon, Part of the Promised Land'

Soon after Israel's attack on Lebanon in June 2024, a far-right movement called Uri Tzafon ("Wake Up the North") organized an online conference calling for Israeli settlement in Lebanon's south. Before you dismiss them, remember that their plans for West Bank settlement seemed equally outlandish 50 years ago, warns a *Haaretz* article.

One of the discussions at the meeting was titled "Successful Models of Settlement From the Past and Lessons for South Lebanon," with Daniella Weiss, Yehudit Katzover, and Rabbi Elishama Cohen.

In the 1970s, Weiss and Katzover emerged as prominent figures in the movement that established Jewish settlements in the West Bank, while Cohen has spent seven years with a tiny band of young students visiting the ruins of Homesh—the West Bank settlement evacuated in 2005 under the disengagement plan. Eventually, the Netanyahu government passed its "canceling the disengagement" law, allowing them to build a permanent structure there.

Weiss recalled the days when Gush Emunim, the original settler movement, founded its first "Samaria" settlement in Sebastia exactly 50 years ago. Today, she leads one of the initiatives seeking to reestablish Israeli settlements in Gaza and has indicated that she is also open to proposals involving southern Lebanon as well.[519]

Meet Daniella Weiss and her vision

Part of a *Haaretz* interview transcript from 2019.

> *"Would you like Israel to expand further, beyond Gaza, beyond Judea and Samaria? Would you like Israel to extend beyond the Jordan River?"*
>
> "Yes, I want to have for the Jewish nation the promised land from the bible, the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, from the Euphrates to the Nile. And I'm sure it will be. Of course, I cannot know how many years it will take, because it wasn't specified by our prophets."

"What about southern Lebanon?"

"It is part of it. All of it. Even parts of Syria. Part of Iraq. Part of Iran. It's huge! This is the promised land. The only question I have is, 'Why does it take so much time?' But I also learn from the prophets that the plan of God is not a human plan."

"Do you think you have any way of convincing people that that would be a good idea?"

"I've convinced many. All the people that are connected with a movement that I run, and many, many, many religious people are sure that this will be the future. Many people believe in it."

"I don't see anything extreme in my approach. This is the basic Jewish approach. The clearer we make this point, the better it will be for all of us – for Jews and Arabs alike. That this is going to be a state just for Jews."

"Let's say that under a certain administration in Washington and a certain coalition in Israel, the government decides its time to move some settlers elsewhere. How do you feel about that idea?"

"We will not let it happen. I know it happened there – I know it happened in Gaza. I'm fully aware of these things. But thank God, we have passed here the line where things like that can happen again. Because in the communities around here there are 500,000 Jews – half a million Jews. And this is power."

"The settlement movement is very strong, and affects all fields of Israeli society, atmosphere and politics."

"I am worried. I am worried that this is the place that will result in the end of Israel."

"Oh no," she says, with the broadest of smiles. But not at all in a cruel way. She is absolutely sincere. And matter of fact.

"This is the future of Israel."[520]

But not everyone needs Biblical justification to take land.

Revisionist Zionism — A Fascist Tradition

Revisionist Zionism, founded by **Ze'ev Jabotinsky** in 1925, emerged as a militant and nationalist branch of the Zionist movement, advocating for a "revision" of the more moderate, labor-oriented Zionism led by figures like David Ben-Gurion and Chaim Weizmann. Jabotinsky's ideology emphasized territorial maximalism, insisting on Jewish sovereignty over the entirety of historic Palestine, including both sides of the Jordan River, and promoted the use of military force to establish an "iron wall" against Arab opposition, believing voluntary Arab consent to a Jewish majority was impossible. Unlike religious Zionism, Revisionist Zionism was distinctly secular, drawing from Theodor Herzl's political Zionism and rejecting traditional religious or socialist frameworks in favor of a nationalist vision centered on individual liberty, private property, and a middle-class Jewish society. Jabotinsky established key organizations like the Betar youth movement and the paramilitary Irgun, which played roles in resisting British rule and advancing Zionist goals through terrorist actions.

In the 1930s, Revisionist Zionism developed notable ties to **Benito Mussolini**'s Italy, as Jabotinsky came to admire aspects of its anti-socialist stance, militarism, and emphasis on national priorities over class struggle. Mussolini provided support by allowing a **Betar** squadron to train at Civitavecchia from 1934 to 1937—what became known as the Betar Naval Academy—where 134 cadets were instructed by Italian Blackshirts, reflecting shared ideological elements such as the denial of class conflict and compulsory labor arbitration.[521] Betar camps and marches emphasized discipline, hierarchy, and physical training, and members wore brown or khaki uniforms,[522] carried flags, and practiced coordinated drills.[523] The movement openly admired European nationalist movements of the 1920s and 1930s, and Betar units frequently used straight-arm salutes modeled on those seen in Fascist Italy.[524] These uniforms and salutes

were not incidental aesthetics—their purpose was to inculcate obedience, unity, and readiness for armed struggle, expressing the belief that Jewish sovereignty would be won not through diplomacy but through disciplined, paramilitary force. Betar today is an international Zionist network with chapters in the US, UK, Australia, and Israel, and it has faced widespread criticism for aggressive tactics that include harassing perceived opponents, such as Muslims, pro-Palestinian activists, and left-wing Jewish voices. Even the extremely Zionist ADL listed Betar USA as a "hate group."[525]

Irgun (Etzel), operating in Mandatory Palestine between 1931 and 1948, also emerged from Jabotinsky's Revisionist movement, taking its emphasis on militant action and translating it into an organized paramilitary underground. Irgun was a terrorist group, using sabotage, bombings, and targeted attacks against Arabs and British military and administrative targets. They were responsible for a series of bombings in 1937-38 in which at least 86 Arab civilians died, including the marketplace bombings in Haifa and Jaffa;[526] the King David Hotel bombing in 1946, carried out while dressed as Arabs, killing 91 people—mostly British civil and military staff, plus Jews and Arabs;[527] the hanging of two British officers in 1947, leaving their booby-trapped bodies in the woods of Netanya;[528] and they participated, along with their splinter group Lehi, in the Deir Yassin massacre in 1948, murdering at least 100-140 Arab civilians.[529]

Lehi ("Stern Gang") was formed in 1940 when Irgun agreed to suspend operations and cooperate with Britain during World War II. They continued assassinations and bombings, including the killings of Lord Moyne, Britain's Minister Resident in the Middle East (1944), and Count Folke Bernadotte, a Swedish diplomat who saved several thousand Jews during the Holocaust (1948). In early 1941, Lehi tried to cut a deal with Nazi Germany against their shared enemy, Britain. Avraham Stern sent an emissary, Naftali Lubenchik, to the German legation in Beirut with an offer: Lehi would wage revolt against the British in Mandate Palestine if Germany recognized a Jewish state on "nationalist and totalitarian" lines and enabled unrestricted

Jewish immigration from Europe. A German naval attaché in Turkey forwarded a memo of the proposal (the so-called "Ankara document") to Berlin on 21 January 1941; Berlin never took it up. Lehi made a second contact attempt later that year, which was also unsuccessful.[530]

These two groups, along with **Haganah**, formed the IDF after the creation of Israel in 1948. Haganah, a so-called self-defense group formed in 1920, came from the socialist Labor Zionist mainstream, the political camp of Ben-Gurion. It also carried out assassinations, bombings, and sabotage, mostly against British military targets but also noncombatants, such as the 1948 Semiramis Hotel bombing that killed around 24-26 civilians.[531] The first-ever political assassination within the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine was executed by Haganah in 1924, against Jacob Israël de Haan, a Dutch-Jewish anti-Zionist lawyer who was about to travel to London with a Haredi delegation to lobby the British government against Zionist plans.[532]

Notable Israeli political figures who came from these groups include, apart from Ben-Gurion, later Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin (Haganah), Menachem Begin (Irgun), and Yitzhak Shamir (Lehi). Concerning the Revisionist Zionist movement, the **Likud Party** is their direct heir. It was created in 1973 from Gahal, a right-wing political alliance formed by the merger of the Herut movement, the Liberal Party, and other right-of-center lists.[533]

A key figure in the Revisionist Zionist movement was Benzion Netanyahu, a historian and prominent Revisionist activist. He became Jabotinsky's personal secretary in New York in 1940 and continued political work in the Revisionist movement in the United States after Jabotinsky's death later that same year. He later helped organize the New Zionist Organization in the United States. His father, Nathan Mileikowsky, was a rabbi, a traveling Zionist orator, and an influential fundraiser and propagandist for the Zionist cause.[534] And his son, Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, would eventually lead Likud, the major heir to the Revisionist tradition.

"Lebensraum Needed for Israel's Exploding Population"

It feels like a slippery slope, as we slide from Mussolini's fascism to explicit Nazi language. "Lebensraum" is the Nazi notion of "living space," which claims Germany needs to acquire territories from others for the German people because they are stronger and worth more. But this sentence is not a smear using an antisemitic Nazi comparison, but an honest admission. The article with this exact title was published in the blog section of *The Times of Israel* on December 4, 2024. *The Times of Israel* does not take responsibility for the blogs, but it shows how some of their regular writers think. After the backlash, the article was taken down, but it is available in an archived version.[535] The writing is quite bad otherwise, comparing demographics and suggesting Russia, with its huge empty landmass, should take refugees in, but it is good for one thing: to show the true face of Zionism. The writer doesn't try to justify land theft with biblical language; he just says it out loud: we need it, so we take it.

These views of a Greater Israel are said to be extreme within Israeli society; most people supposedly do not agree with them—then again, talk about "Judea and Samaria" is common, which is a reference to the annexation of the West Bank, and the recent annexation of Mount Hermon and other parts of Syria was widely celebrated in Israel, nobody condemned it.

The Neocon-Zionist Alliance

Neocons as we know them today emerged in the 1970s-1980s, gained GOP influence under Reagan, and became dominant under George W. Bush. The alliance with Zionists started after the Six-Day War of 1967, but neocon history goes back further, taking several interesting turns.

Pre-1960s, the intellectual foundations: In the 1930s-1940s, many future neocons began as Trotskyist or left-wing anti-Stalinist intellectuals in New York City. Figures like Irving Kristol (often called the "godfather of neoconservatism"), Norman Podhoretz, and Sidney Hook were part of the "anti-communist left," who opposed Stalinism, Maoism, and Castro's regime as totalitarian perversions of socialism. They were influenced by Trotsky's critique of Stalinism and rejected Soviet totalitarianism while still holding progressive views. They were associated with journals like *Partisan Review* and with organizations such as the American Committee for Cultural Freedom.

1960s, break with the New Left: The counterculture, anti-war movement, and radicalization of the Democratic Party alienated these intellectuals. They opposed the New Left's embrace of Third World revolutions (e.g., support for Castro and Mao). They were also against affirmative action and racial quotas, seen as reverse discrimination, as well as appeasement of the Soviet Union (e.g., détente policies).

In 1965, Irving Kristol launched *The Public Interest*, a journal critical of Great Society programs from a data-driven, skeptical perspective—a hallmark of early neoconservatism.

The Six-Day War in 1967 galvanized many Jewish intellectuals (a significant portion of early neocons) toward strong support for Israel, shifting them rightward on foreign policy. From this point onward, the neocon-Zionist alliance formed gradually in the 1970s as Jewish neoconservatives, alienated by the New Left's anti-Israel stance, aligned with

pro-Israel hawks like Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson and used platforms like *Commentary* magazine to fuse anti-communism with strong support for Israel's security against Soviet-backed Arab states. This partnership solidified in the following decades.

1970s, formal emergence as "Neoconservatives": The term "neoconservative" was coined—derisively—by socialist Michael Harrington in 1972 to describe liberals drifting rightward. In the 1970s, neocons aligned with the Democratic Party's hawkish wing, particularly Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson. Jackson's staff included future neocon heavyweights like Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Elliott Abrams. Many neocons initially supported Jimmy Carter but grew disillusioned with his human-rights-focused foreign policy, seen as weak toward the USSR. The 1979 Iranian Revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan hardened their anti-appeasement stance.

1980s, alliance with Reagan and the GOP: Many neocons (e.g., Jeane Kirkpatrick, Irving Kristol) switched to the Republican Party and backed Ronald Reagan. Kirkpatrick's 1979 essay "Dictatorships and Double Standards" became a neocon manifesto: it argued that the US should support anti-communist authoritarians (e.g., Pinochet) over totalitarian leftists. Neocons influenced Reagan's anti-Soviet policies, the Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars"), and support for anti-communist insurgents (e.g., the Contras and the mujahideen).

1990s-2000s, peak influence: After the Cold War, neocons pivoted to "promoting democracy" abroad and sustaining American primacy. The Project for the New American Century (PNAC), founded in 1997 by William Kristol and Robert Kagan, pushed regime change in Iraq—just as the document written for Netanyahu, titled *A Clean Break*. Neocons in the George W. Bush administration became the architects of the Iraq War.

2009-2016, the Obama years: Somewhat marginalized under Obama, neocons criticized what they viewed as "weakness" on Syria and Libya; yet they still managed to influence policy (e.g., the 2011 Libya intervention). They opposed the Iran nuclear deal, aligning with Netanyahu and Zionists. Several backed Hillary Clinton in 2016, as she proved to be quite hawkish as Secretary of State.

2017-2020, Trump's First Term: Many neocons opposed Donald Trump's "America First" isolationism, and a number joined the "Never Trump" movement, such as the Lincoln Project (2019). Trump ultimately adopted hawkish policies aligning with neocon and Zionist priorities, such as recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and assassinating Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, who was on a peace-negotiation mission with Saudi Arabia in Baghdad, mediated by the Iraqi government.

2021-2024, Biden's Presidency: A major resurgence occurred under Biden: with people in the administration like Antony Blinken, Victoria Nuland (wife of Robert Kagan), and Jake Sullivan, neocons and "liberal hawks" shaped aggressive Ukraine policies and unconditional support for Israel post-October 7. They rebranded as defenders of the "rules-based order," but their hypocrisy was exposed by double standards in dealing with Ukraine versus the Gaza war.

2025-, Trump's Second Term: In rhetoric at least, Donald Trump opposed neocon policies such as forever wars during elections and in the early months of his second term. He publicly humiliated Mike Pompeo and John Bolton but ultimately surrounded himself with neocons and Zionists and now carries out their policies in Ukraine and the Middle East. Pompeo predicted this in a pre-election article, describing what Trump would do as president—how he would follow the neocon playbook.[536] Maybe Pompeo was humiliated, but in the end he—and the neocons—won.

The Self-Declared Goal: World Domination

In 2003, former UK minister Michael Meacher blamed the Iraq War on the US desire for global domination. He maintained that the US government planned to establish military control over the Gulf region regardless of whether Saddam Hussein stayed in power, because Washington sought secure long-term access to oil supplies.

"It seems that the so-called war on terrorism is being used largely as a bogus cover for achieving wider U.S. strategic geopolitical objectives," Meacher wrote.

"The global war on terrorism has all the hallmarks of a political myth propagated to pave the way for a wholly different agenda—the U.S. goal of world hegemony, built around securing by force command over the oil supplies required to drive the whole project." He said the agenda had been laid out by a think tank linked to prominent neocon hawks inside the US administration.[537]

The Project for the New American Century (PNAC), which Meacher referenced, was a neoconservative think tank active from 1997 to 2006, founded by right-wing thinkers William Kristol and Robert Kagan. As a 2003 BBC article explained, the group was arguably one of the most influential in Washington and was widely believed to have significantly shaped—or at least reflected—much of President George W. Bush's worldview. PNAC held that America should use its power to shape global affairs and advance US interests around the world—by military means if necessary.

It had several high-profile sympathizers, including Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton, and Richard Perle.[538]

PNAC and associated neocon thinkers outlined their foreign-policy vision across several key documents, including *Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy*, the *Statement of Principles*, and *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources for a New Century*, discussed next.

Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy, written by William Kristol and Robert Kagan in 1996—one year before the founding of the Project for the New American Century—set out a vision of what the authors described as American "benevolent global hegemony." The essay argued that US foreign policy should aim to preserve American dominance for as long as possible through a neo-Reaganite approach emphasizing military supremacy, strategic assertiveness, and confidence in the moral legitimacy of US power.[539]

The ***Statement of Principles*** (June 3, 1997) was the founding document, signed by figures like Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz; it called for a "Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity" to assert US global leadership, framing this approach as essential to American security and national purpose. It stated that what the US needs is "a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities." The document also called for an international order friendly to US security, and "significant" defense spending.[540]

The 90-page report, ***Rebuilding America's Defenses*** (September 2000), authored under PNAC auspices by Thomas Donnelly and chaired by Donald Kagan and Gary Schmitt, served as a blueprint for US military transformation to enforce global dominance. It emphasized preeminence through force, including nuclear superiority, multiple simultaneous wars, and control of space/cyberspace.

> "[The United States should] seek to preserve and extend its position of global leadership by maintaining the preeminence of U.S. military forces." (*Key Findings*)
>
> "The United States is the world's only superpower, combining preeminent military power, global technological leadership, and the world's largest economy. Moreover, America stands at the head of a system of alliances which includes the

> world's other leading democratic powers. At no time in history has the international situation been more fluid. No other great power—not China, Russia, Germany, Japan or India—has the political will, shadow strategic tradition, or economic resources to challenge U.S. global leadership." (*Introduction*)
>
> "To preserve this 'American peace' through the 21st century, the global order must have a secure foundation on unquestioned U.S. military preeminence." (*Section II: Securing the Peace*)
>
> "The four core missions demanded by U.S. global leadership: fight and decisively win simultaneous major theater wars; perform the 'constabulary' duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions; ensure that the United States remains the dominant air and space power; and maintain nuclear strategic superiority." (*Section III: Core Missions*)[541]

Key recommendations included: "Develop and deploy global missile defenses to defend the American homeland and American allies, and to provide a secure basis for U.S. power projection around the world"; "Control the new 'international commons' of space and 'cyberspace,' and pave the way for the creation of a new military service—U.S. Space Forces—with the mission of space control"; and maintaining forces able to "dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States."[542]

These passages illustrate PNAC's explicit pursuit of unchallenged US global hegemony, viewing military force—including preemptive action, removing hostile regimes "when necessary," and technological dominance—as indispensable for deterring rivals, controlling strategic regions, and sustaining a unipolar world order. In other words, the neocons' goal was indeed global domination, even if they called it "benevolent"—they stated it openly in their own documents.

America's Wars or Israel's Wars?

The neocon goals and Zionist goals overlap to a very great extent, it is clear from PNAC writings. Israel is referenced as a "key strategic ally" whose security is intertwined with US interests in the Middle East.

Concerning Iraq and Saddam Hussein, the regime-change push started under Bill Clinton's presidency, when Zalmay Khalilzad and Paul Wolfowitz wrote a piece titled "**Overthrow Him**" for the *Weekly Standard* in 1997.[543]

Then, the following year, immediately after founding PNAC, Robert Kagan and Bill Kristol demanded regime change in Iraq in a **letter to Clinton**, signed also by Wolfowitz, Khalilzad, Richard Perle, Elliott Abrams, James Woolsey, and Francis Fukuyama, among others. They urged Clinton to take action against Iraq; otherwise, the neocons warned, "the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the world's supply of oil will all be put at hazard."[544] They succeeded in getting Congress to pass the **Iraq Liberation Act of 1998**, which made it official American policy to seek regime change.[545]

In the ***Letter to President Bush on the War on Terrorism***, dated September 20, 2001, PNAC stated that "Israel has been and remains America's staunchest ally against international terrorism, especially in the Middle East. The United States should fully support our fellow democracy in its fight against terrorism."[546]

In 2002, Philip Zelikow, another neocon who was an assistant to Susan Rice at the time and later headed the 9/11 Commission, noted at a public forum that many doubted Iraq posed any real threat to the United States: "I'll tell you what I think the real threat is... It's the threat against Israel."

The neocon logic was that toppling Saddam would strengthen Israel's position, explains Scott Horton, author and director of the Libertarian Institute. AIPAC and the broader Israel lobby also pushed for the war.[547]

But the beginning of the story goes back a few years earlier and involves direct collaboration between neocons and Israeli factions.

A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm (1996)[548] was a policy memo prepared for Benjamin Netanyahu during his first term as Prime Minister of Israel, by prominent PNAC-associated figures including Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, and David Wurmser. The paper outlined very much the same regime-change ambitions that became the main US policies in the Middle East after 9/11. *A Clean Break* urged a tougher regional strategy, including removing Saddam Hussein in Iraq and rolling back regimes that underwrote anti-Israeli militancy. It also framed Iran—alongside Syria—as a principal strategic challenger, calling for measures to contain, weaken, and deter Tehran's regional reach and missile/WMD ambitions.

In Washington, soon after receiving the memo, Netanyahu delivered a high-profile speech that echoed some of its themes about reshaping the region. Following is an excerpt from an article published in 2007 by *Vanity Fair*, ten years after *A Clean Break*.

> The neoconservatives have had Iran in their sights for more than a decade. On July 8, 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's newly elected prime minister and the leader of its right-wing Likud Party, paid a visit to the neoconservative luminary Richard Perle in Washington, D.C. The subject of their meeting was a policy paper that Perle and other analysts had written for an Israeli-American think tank, the Institute for Advanced Strategic Political Studies. Titled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," the paper contained the kernel of a breathtakingly radical vision for a new Middle East. By waging wars against Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, the paper asserted, Israel and the U.S. could stabilize the region. Later, the neoconservatives argued that this policy could democratize the Middle East.

> Netanyahu certainly seemed to think so. Two days after meeting with Perle, the prime minister addressed a joint session of Congress with a speech that borrowed from "A Clean Break." He called for the "democratization" of terrorist states in the Middle East and warned that peaceful means might not be sufficient. War might be unavoidable.
>
> Netanyahu also made one significant addition to "A Clean Break." The paper's authors were concerned primarily with Syria and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, but Netanyahu saw a greater threat elsewhere. "The most dangerous of these regimes is Iran," he said.
>
> Ten years later [in 2007] "A Clean Break" looks like nothing less than a playbook for U.S.-Israeli foreign policy during the Bush-Cheney era. Many of the initiatives outlined in the paper have been implemented—removing Saddam from power, setting aside the "land for peace" formula to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, attacking Hezbollah in Lebanon—all with disastrous results.
>
> Nevertheless, neoconservatives still advocate continuing on the path Netanyahu staked out in his speech and taking the fight to Iran. As they see it, this war is senseless if you don't give it a regional context.
>
> One neocon after another has made the same plea: Iraq was the beginning, not the end.[549]

Like the campaign to overthrow Saddam, the crusade for regime change in Iran got under way in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. One of the first shots came in *The Wall Street Journal* in November 2001, when Eliot Cohen, a member of PNAC, declared, "The overthrow of the first theocratic revolutionary Muslim state [Iran] and its replacement by a moderate or secular government … would be no less important a victory in this war than the annihilation of bin Laden."[550]

Who controls who

Many see the post-9/11 wars—including today's conflicts in the Middle East—as part of a grand design long advocated by US neoconservatives and their Israeli allies. Generally, there are three views: one claims that Israel controls US foreign policy; another that the US uses Israel as a strategic asset for its own goals; and a third says they are mutually interdependent, both steering the other.

1. Israel controls US foreign policy

This view posits that Israeli interests—often via lobbying groups like AIPAC—dominate US Middle East strategy, often at the expense of American priorities (e.g., endless wars or strained Arab alliances). This view of undue influence, amplified post-October 7, is growing among the US public on both political sides; they see these wars the US fights as "Israel's wars," unnecessary for US homeland security.

Columbia University economist **Jeffrey Sachs** believes Israel pushes the US into unnecessary wars. He often refers to retired Gen. Wesley Clark's now fairly well-known interview from 2007. Clark, a former commander in multiple theaters, recalled a Pentagon talk only a few days after 9/11 about a plan to "take out" seven countries in roughly five years: "starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran."[551] Wars and interventions in these countries, Sachs claims, were on behalf of Israel. He highlights Benjamin Netanyahu's part in US debates: his 2002 Capitol Hill testimony urging action against Iraq; later speeches rallying Congress against Iran's nuclear program; and a general pattern of pressing Washington toward conflicts in the region. "It's been part of Netanyahu's policy to pull the United States into repeated wars" since 1996, Sachs said in an interview.[552]

Former US President **Jimmy Carter** called this influence a "stranglehold" in his 2006 book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*.[553] In the UK, former foreign minister **Sir Alan Duncan** wrote in his diaries in 2017: "The Israelis think they control the Foreign Office. And they do!"[554]

This view is reinforced by acts Israel commits without US approval—which the US then covers up. A good example is the case of the USS Liberty, a US Navy intelligence ship that was attacked by Israeli air and naval forces on June 8, 1967, during the Six-Day War, resulting in 34 American deaths and 171 injuries. But "strategic partnership" overrode due process, and the case was covered up by both the US and Israeli governments through a hastily convened naval court of inquiry that lasted just one week; subsequent investigations were blocked, classified documents remain sealed, and survivors were ordered to remain silent under threat of court-martial.[555] A more recent case is when Israel attacked Qatar in September 2025, despite US guarantees to Qatar. Here too, after the attack happened, the US simply accepted it and wants you to forget about it.

2. The US uses Israel for its own goals

Here, Israel is seen as a US proxy—a "strategic asset" for containing rivals like Iran, securing oil routes, and countering Soviet/Russian/Chinese influence. US aid buys compliance, making Israel a tool of American imperialism rather than a puppet master. This perspective is common among realists and left-leaning critics, emphasizing US leverage (e.g., veto power, arms conditions) over Israeli autonomy.

Noam Chomsky, world-renowned linguist and critic of US policy, frames Israel as a US "attack dog" in the Middle East, enforcing hegemony since the 1956 Suez Crisis. He calls Israel a "client state"—a proxy to enforce American hegemony.[556] Late Columbia professor **Edward Said** critiqued the alliance as neocolonial, while some Marxist scholars see Israel as a bulwark against pan-Arabism. **Stephen Zunes**, a University of San Francisco professor, views Israel as a US outpost for countering Arab nationalism.

Realist **Lawrence Wilkerson**, a retired US Army Colonel and former Chief of Staff to Colin Powell, views Israel as a "strategic liability" but one the US exploits for regional dominance, warning it drags America into wars. He argues unconditional US support enables Israeli actions while serving Washington's anti-Iran agenda.[557]

3. The US and Israel are mutually interdependent

This mutual-dependence view sees the relationship as symbiotic: Israel provides intelligence and military technology (e.g., "battle-tested" arms and surveillance systems), while the US offers aid, vetoes, and deterrence. Neither fully "controls" the other; they are interdependent, with shared values and perceived threats binding them. As University of Chicago political scientist **John Mearsheimer** often puts it, as he did in *The New Statesman*, "the US and Israel are joined at the hip."[558]

Mearsheimer is often misquoted or misrepresented as saying "Israel controls America"—especially by critics who want to dismiss him as conspiratorial because of his book with **Stephen Walt**, a political scientist at the Harvard Kennedy School, published in 2007, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. In the book, they point out the wide-ranging coalition that includes neoconservatives, Christian Zionists, leading journalists, and AIPAC, which plays an outsized role in shaping US Middle East policy and narrowing the public debate around it. Many Americans thought the Iraq War was about oil, they wrote, but "the war was motivated in good part by a desire to make Israel more secure."[559] At the same time, they emphasize that the lobby "is certainly not a cabal or conspiracy that 'controls' U.S. foreign policy. It is simply a powerful interest group, made up of both Jews and gentiles" that "works to move U.S. foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction."[560] Mearsheimer agrees that Washington's strategic relationship with Jerusalem brings benefits to the United States, but in his view the costs outweigh the benefits.[561]

Others with similar views, without pushing a pro-Israel narrative, include **Bruce Riedel**, ex-CIA/NSC, a frequent media voice, widely cited on US Mideast strategy; **Shibley Telhami**, a prominent academic (U.Md./Brookings), big footprint in public debates; **Steven A. Cook**, a CFR senior fellow, regular columnist/commentator with broad reach; and **William Quandt**, a highly respected Camp David architect, but with a lower media profile.

"The New Middle East" and Beyond

The idea of "Greater Israel" is not only about expanded territorial borders; it is also understood to imply regional dominance across the Middle East. In this view, the strategic visions of neoconservatives in the United States and certain Zionist ideological currents have often overlapped, particularly regarding military power, regional restructuring, and the goal of securing a pro-Western balance of forces. Many analysts interpret Israel's regional hegemony as functioning alongside, or as an extension of, American hegemony, with both agendas reinforcing one another. This alignment has been visible since the era of the "New American Century" in the 1990s, when influential US policy circles promoted a vision of sustained American dominance intertwined with Israel's strategic security objectives.

Of the seven countries Wesley Clark listed, with Lebanon and Syria shattered, only Iran stands. Benjamin Netanyahu has said he can only accept a "Libya-style agreement"—that is, "go in, blow up the facilities, dismantle all the equipment, under American supervision with American execution."[562] For Iranians, Libya's disarmament followed by collapse is the cautionary tale, so they are determined not to accept such terms. The confrontation therefore continues: Israel has already carried out direct strikes inside Iran in June 2025 during the so-called Twelve-Day War, which was a spectacular failure, so the desire to force regime change still exists. Recent statements, arms deliveries, force movements, and geopolitical alignments all indicate that the war with Iran remains unfinished.

But relations with Iran were not always this bad. *Public Seminar*, an independent online journal of The New School Publishing Initiative, released an article that looks at the relations between Iran and Israel from a historic perspective. Next is a summary of the writing.

Before the revolution in 1979, Iran, along with other non-Arab states such as Turkey and Ethiopia, was part of Ben-Gurion's "periphery doctrine" of strategic partnerships with Israel to counterbalance Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. The aim of the doctrine was to prevent any other power from becoming a regional hegemon. The Arab monarchies shared this strategic interest, as they viewed the republican Pan-Arabism championed by Egypt's President Nasser as a threat. It resulted in a regional cold war, with republican nations such as Egypt and Syria backed by the Soviet Union, and the Arab monarchies supported by the United States.

Iran and Israel were allies until the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, but even after the Khomeini regime came to power they remained secret partners during the 1980s, when Israel secretly assisted Iran militarily during its war with Iraq.

Saddam Hussein's goal of dominating the Middle East from Baghdad, along with Iran's plan for a Shia Crescent stretching from Tehran to Beirut, alarmed Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. As a result, they openly welcomed the United States as a balancing power and quietly supported Israel's covert actions against both Iraq and Iran.

Following the Gulf War in 1991, no country in the region challenged American dominance, effectively securing Israel's position. With Iraq restrained and Iran weak in the post–Cold War environment, Israel seemed ready to move toward normalization with its neighbors.

After the Iraq invasion in 2003, Saddam's removal created major instability across the region and allowed Iran to expand its influence. Neighboring countries could no longer stop Iran from expanding its influence inside Iraq. Israel and Saudi Arabia suddenly faced the reality of a Shia Crescent: Iran had achieved a land corridor all the way to Lebanon. As the United States reduced its focus on the Middle East under Obama, Israeli leaders concluded that Israel would have to act on its own to reshape the region. This kind of push for regional power would require discreet American support and tacit acceptance from Arab states.

The collapse of Assad's regime in Syria in 2025 further reinforced Israel's determination to take on the role of a regional hegemon. Tehran's land corridor to Beirut no longer exists, effectively blocking Iran's ability to supply weapons to Hezbollah. Furthermore, Israel now has complete aerial supremacy over Syria, clearing the path for striking Iran. After destroying Iran's Shia Crescent, Netanyahu expects that "normalizing" attacks on Iran will trigger regime change.

It is this vision of hegemony that now shapes Israel's regional policy—and has pushed the whole Middle East to the brink of war.[563]

Israel's "Coalition for Regional Security" and the role envisioned for Arab leaders

Al-Estiklal, a Palestinian newspaper, covered the current situation in the Middle East following the Israeli attack on Iran, which is summarized next.

Just hours after the aggression ended and Benjamin Netanyahu spoke of "a new Israeli-led Middle East," a campaign began promoting the so-called "Israeli Coalition for Regional Security," which reportedly includes 10 Arab leaders, notably from Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

This coalition—backed by a large number of senior Israeli officials—launched an ad campaign calling for a new regional alliance between Israel and its neighbors, now that "the Iranian threat" has supposedly receded. The campaign predicts that new regional partnerships are on the horizon across the Middle East.

Billboards appeared in public squares in Israel showing Arab rulers standing behind Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump under banners reading "Abraham Shield Plan" and "Coalition for Regional Security." The posters featured UAE, Bahrain, Oman, and Moroccan leaders standing beside Netanyahu, with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and el-Sisi next to Trump. Also shown were Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Jordan's King Abdullah II—and, more surprisingly, Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun and Syria's President Ahmed al-

Sharaa. Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad was notably absent from the poster, as was Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—both countries are considered supporters of Hamas.

According to Israeli analysis, the coalition, heavily advertised across Tel Aviv buildings, marks an attempt to launch a new Middle Eastern alliance led by Israel, following its claims of "victory" in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran.

The initiative was formed by five Israeli figures—Dekel, Lianne Pollak-David, Koby Huberman, Moty Cristal, and Attila Somfalvi—primarily focusing on Israeli security, regional order, and economic opportunities, with the goal of ensuring stability and long-term peace for the region. Over 100 prominent Israeli figures and officials are leading the initiative, aiming to move from a phase where Arab leaders simply "served" Israeli interests to one of full normalization and alliance-building. This coincided with a statement by Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, who told CNBC that the Trump administration expects major announcements soon about new countries joining the Abraham Accords.

According to statements published by the Israeli-led "Coalition for Regional Security," which spearheaded the billboard campaign promoting the normalization drive between Israel and Arab states, the goal is to rebuild the "State of Israel as a Jewish-Zionist democratic homeland" in the coming years.

The coalition claims this will be achieved through "a measured and intelligent analysis of the regional map, its risks and opportunities, while combining military, political, and economic power."

Under the headline "The Abraham Shield Plan," the coalition describes the initiative as a blueprint for creating a new regional order that ensures Israel's security.

The coalition also outlined key components of its regional blueprint, which include what it called a "declaration of a gradual, responsible, secure path of separation from the Palestinians within a decade, as part of a comprehensive regional agreement."

Other elements of the plan include leveraging regional powers to stabilize Syria and transform it into a "buffer zone" against the Iranian axis; deepening the so-called "moderate regional alliance" through renewed normalization with Saudi Arabia; and expanding the Abraham Accords.

A top priority, the coalition stated, is "to prevent Iran from re-establishing itself in Syria, to deepen the 'buffer' between Syria and the Iranian axis, and to support a new, responsible, and stable Syrian government that may lead to a new era in relations between the countries in the future."

The Coalition for Regional Security had already submitted its "Abraham Shield" plan to US President Donald Trump, calling it a roadmap for "Middle East security and prosperity." The strategy promises to "stabilize the Middle East, neutralize regional threats, and secure lasting peace and prosperity for Israel and the region."

Writer Thomas Keith summarized the initiative as a blueprint for permanent Israeli dominance in the region; an architectural plan for post-sovereignty. He argued that it rebrands invasion as reform, ethnic erasure as stability, and colonial containment as regional security.

Keith described the so-called "moderate regional alliance" as a euphemism for an Arab NATO, with Israel at its core and the US acting as the quiet force behind it.

He warned that the plan aims to outsource the punishment of Palestinian resistance to Gulf states, entrench Egypt and Jordan as regional enforcers, and incentivize "Arab regimes" to comply with Israel through massive financial, technological, and commercial incentives.

"The Abraham Shield" is ideological hegemony wrapped in diplomacy, enforced through the lure of funding and digital control. It imagines a Middle East where Palestine exists only as a security vacuum to be filled, Iran is sanctioned into collapse, and Arab countries become logistic corridors and policing zones, according to Keith.

Israel, as the unspoken sovereign power, would set the rules and redraw the region's borders, concludes the *Al-Estiklal* article.[564]

Quotes from the Abraham Shield Plan website

> In the past year, the State of Israel has fought the most just war since its founding. Like a phoenix, the State of Israel has managed to rise from the dust, demonstrating unprecedented military power that has brought about monumental changes in the Middle East.
>
> Its historic military achievements have proven, beyond a shadow of a doubt, to both its enemies and regional partners that the State of Israel is a powerful and deterrent regional player—one that will not hesitate to use its great power to pursue its enemies. However, Israel will not succeed in defeating Iran and preventing the restoration of its proxies on its own or through military force alone.
>
> Now, the historic mission of the State of Israel is to translate its tremendous military achievements into a political turning point. One that will break the Iranian stranglehold, leverage the current regional opportunity, and create a new regional order in the Middle East.[565]

Preparations for war with Iran, weakening China and Russia

Now that former jihadists form the Syrian government, it has surprisingly good relations with Israel: Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa is reported to be open to normalization with Israel and to giving up Syrian claims to the **Golan Heights**. (Recent map by the Syrian Interior Ministry shows the country without the Golan![566]) The Trump administration is expecting Syria to be one of the next countries to join the Abraham Accords, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said.[567] The *New York Post* quotes US congressmen after meeting al-Sharaa saying he is open to joining the Abraham Accords and negotiating over the Golan.[568] Israel insists any deal with Damascus should include recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights.[569]

After Assad's fall, Israeli forces took the Syrian summit sector of **Mount Hermon**, the highest peak of the Golan plateau, and have said they will stay indefinitely, framing it as a buffer against hostile groups.[570] The Israeli army also gained new land reaching as far as the countryside near Damascus and into Daraa province in southern Syria.[571]

There is also talk of more land grab for "security reasons." Called "**David's Corridor**," it is a strategic project that begins in the Golan Heights, passes through eastern Syria and the areas of Syrian Kurdish territories, reaches **Iraqi Kurdistan**, and then connects to the Mediterranean.[572] The Kurdish territories, both in Syria and Iraq, are under US control, and in Iraq even the Mossad is said to be present[573] (possibly in Syria too[574]). What the "Mediterranean connection" means, among other things, is that there could be a continuous US-Israeli land corridor further northeast, through **Turkey** and the **Zangezur Corridor**, all the way to friendly **Azerbaijan**. The land link, now to be renamed the "Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity," is a major transit corridor between Turkey and Azerbaijan through Armenia, along its border with Iran.[575] No surprise, Iran—which would be cut off from its friendly neighbor Armenia—views this deal as a NATO front along its northern border.

Turkey always plays all sides, taking a pragmatic approach, so it will not be an obstacle to the plans; for example, while being a vocal foe of Israel, it is also its key economic partner. (Turkey was the 5th-largest exporter to Israel in 2024 despite "trade bans."[576]) Concerning Azerbaijan, it is no secret it already has good ties with Israel, despite being a Muslim and predominantly Shia country. Israel has been one of Azerbaijan's main arms suppliers and military partners for over a decade, providing a wide range of advanced systems and support, such as drones, air-defense systems, arms, and intelligence and tech cooperation. The friendship is reciprocal. In 2012, Foreign Policy wrote that US officials believe the Israelis have gained access to Azeri airbases. "The Israelis have bought an airfield," a senior administration official said, "and the airfield is called Azerbaijan."[577]

There were further developments in late 2025. On November 6, Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev received a NATO delegation. The head of state emphasized that the Azerbaijani army has been brought into conformity with NATO standards, highlighting the close collaboration with the Turkish army within this framework. During the meeting, the sides discussed the prospects of Azerbaijan-NATO cooperation, as well as exchanged views on regional and global matters.[578]

Another major news is that, according to *Reuters*, the US military plans to establish a presence at a **Damascus airbase**, primarily "to monitor and support a proposed Israel-Syria security pact." Functions reportedly include logistics, surveillance, refueling, and humanitarian operations. A Syrian foreign ministry source denied the *Reuters* report,[579] but al-Sharaa's visit to Washington and his meeting with Donald Trump on November 10, 2025, suggest there are all kinds of negotiations behind the curtain. Just a few days earlier, Trump admitted on camera that the decision to lift sanctions on Syria in June came at the request of Turkey and "actually Israel." It was reported by *Enab Baladi*, an independent Syrian news organization,[580] and the video clip is available on social media.[581]

There are also plans "to establish a large **US military base in Israel** near the Gaza border for use by international forces that would operate inside the Strip," according to a November 2025 *The Times of Israel* report,[582] although US officials firmly denied the claim.[583] However it is, it would fit in the US vision for Gaza, which was first publicly revealed a little earlier in August via a leak published by *The Washington Post*.

The bold plan, named the "**GREAT Trust**" (Gaza Reconstitution, Economic Acceleration and Transformation), aims to "strengthen [the US] hold in the east Mediterranean." It envisions a mini-Dubai complete with a "Trump Riviera" and an "Elon Musk Smart Manufacturing Zone," where the remaining Palestinian population that was not forced to "voluntarily" leave Gaza provides "low-cost" labor, and where industry is powered by stolen "Gas from Gaza-

Marine." It is all part of a bigger vision which goes beyond Iran. The GREAT Trust wants to integrate Gaza "into the Abrahamic fabric and the broader IMEC initiative."[584]

IMEC stands for India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and the plan seeks to "provide a clear alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative."[585] The aim is to build a multimodal trade route linking India to Europe through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel, integrating rail lines, ports, energy grids, and digital infrastructure. It is intended to counter China by offering a Western-aligned alternative—reducing reliance on Chinese shipping lanes, challenging Beijing's dominance in infrastructure finance, and drawing key Gulf states and India into a US-centric economic and strategic network.

Israel has also sought to establish a presence near the strategic Red Sea entrance at Bab el-Mandeb. **Socotra** and **Perim** (Mayun) are small islands there belonging to Yemen, which were seized in 2020 by UAE-supported separatists from the Saudi-backed government.[586] Israel was alleged to be working with the Emiratis to establish military and intelligence centers on Socotra and Perim;[587] a "mysterious airbase" was already built on the latter.[588] For similar strategic reasons, at the very end of 2025, Israel recognized the "**Republic of Somaliland**," a breakaway region of Somalia, "in the spirit of the Abraham Accords."[589] Somalia and Arab nations denounced the Israeli move.[590]

If it's all cemented, there will be a US-Israeli arch that stretches from the Caucasus and Caspian Sea to the Horn of Africa. But the vision extends much further.

Lain America and the Isaac Accords

The "Isaac Accords" are a Latin American extension of the Abraham Accords model that aims to reorder Latin American politics by locking governments, economies, and security institutions into an Israeli and US strategic orbit. Countries wishing to join are expected to move embassies to Jerusalem, redesignate Hamas and Hezbollah, reverse voting patterns at the UN and the OAS, enter intelligence-sharing

arrangements that target rivals (especially China, Iran, and leftist regional actors), and open its strategic sectors. Argentina's Javier Milei is at the forefront of the initiative; he has pledged total support for Israel, as has Venezuelan opposition figure María Corina Machado.[591] The Isaac Accords plans to expand to Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and possibly El Salvador, according to the American Friends of the Isaac Accords.[592] Controversially, El Salvador's libertarian president, Nayib Bukele, is of Palestinian descent yet very pro-Israel.[593] Bolivia and Chile have recently pivoted to the right,[594] and the president of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, was just kidnapped by the US on January 3, 2026. Only Colombia and BRICS founder Brazil stand. It all aligns with Trump's re-(mis)interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, which he proudly calls the "Donroe" document after himself.[595]

The so-called "CRINK" group

On the other hand, China, Russia, and North Korea all play a role in helping Iran. This emerging anti-Western bloc of four countries has been dubbed "CRINK," a derogatory name derived from their initials. After the June 2025 strikes, Tehran has looked above all to Beijing and, to a lesser extent, Moscow to help it rebuild its damaged missile and air-defense capabilities. China is reported to be supplying systems and components to replenish Iran's arsenal,[596] while Moscow remains a key partner.[597] North Korea, for its part, has for decades cooperated with Iran on ballistic missiles and nuclear technology, and Western reports say that partnership has intensified in recent years,[598] but there is no evidence of a new surge of support after the Israeli-US attacks.

As of January 4, 2026, a regime-change operation is underway in Iran, with Mossad openly bragging about being involved "in the field."[599] The war, although not yet full-scale at the time of writing, is unfolding in real life. If Iran falls, the neocons won't stop there: they want Central Asia and Mongolia under their control, Russia fragmented or at least weakened, and China contained.

Israel's Religious Zionist Far Right

To understand the forces driving the conflict in the Middle East, it is necessary to examine one of the key actors: the Jewish religious Zionist far right. Doing so, however, first requires clarifying what makes someone a Jew, what Judaism is, and the traditional views on Zionism.

In brief, classical rabbinic tradition holds that Jews are those bound by the Torah, while Judaism is understood as a covenant (*brit*) with God. Zionism, from this perspective, represents a misinterpretation of the faith, amounting to rebellion against divine will. In traditional Jewish thought, exile and redemption are governed by God, not by human action and politics, and the return to sovereignty must await the coming of the Messiah. Historically, most Orthodox Jews opposed Zionism, but over time attitudes diversified and many adopted a non-Zionist pragmatic position: they do not view the state of Israel as religiously legitimate, yet participate in its institutions. In contrast, religious Zionists interpret the modern state and immigration as part of the redemptive process. The religious far right believes pursuing settlement and territorial expansion is a way to hasten redemption; it has always been a minority within Jewish society, but over recent decades it has become disproportionately influential.

The idea of Zionism is rooted in 17th-century Protestant Restorationism, long predating Jewish political Zionism. Early Jewish Zionists, emerging from the 19th century, were predominantly secular, viewing Judaism as a national or ethnic identity rather than a religious one. While religious Jewish Zionists did exist in the early period, they remained marginal until the mid-20th century.

The Zionist project—to establish a Jewish state in historic Palestine—began in the late 1800s and gained momentum in the early 1900s through events such as land acquisitions and settlement, the Zionist Congresses, the publication of Theodor Herzl's book, and the 1917 Balfour Declaration. In 1948, the State of Israel was established as a fundamentally secular political entity, though it incorporated religious institutions for pragmatic and political reasons.

Religious Zionism began to grow in influence after statehood, but its decisive transformation occurred following the 1967 Six-Day War. The capture of East Jerusalem was interpreted by many religious Zionists as a sign of divine intervention, the "restoration of Jerusalem" in a biblical sense. The religious far right believed that territorial expansion constituted a divine mandate to take more land. This theology justified settlement expansion, provocation at flashpoints, and activism around the Temple Mount. At times, religious extremists engaged in acts of violence; their most consequential act was the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, effectively derailing the Oslo peace process that he had initiated.

Emerging after the Oslo years, the "hilltop youth" established unauthorized outposts across the West Bank. Rooted in settlement yeshivot (plural of yeshiva) and nationalist rabbinic circles, they valorize pioneering, herding, and stone-by-stone construction. Relatively small in number (9-10% of Jewish Israelis), the settler network wields outsized influence through municipal and ministerial allies.

Politically, the religious Zionist far right gained power in a fractured Knesset, where small parties can become kingmakers. Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly relied on these factions for parliamentary survival and policy leverage. While not religious, Netanyahu's secular goals often align with theirs. Today, religious far-right figures such as Bezalel Smotrich of the Religious Zionist Party (HaTzionut HaDatit) and Itamar Ben-Gvir of the Otzma Yehudit party serve as ministers in the governing coalition—and they are not deterred by the prospect of an apocalyptic final war foretold in the Bible.

Who Is a Jew and What Is Judaism?

The traditional view holds that the definition of the Jewish nation—that is, who is a Jew—is that they are the people who accepted the Torah. "Our nation, the B'nei Yisroel, is a nation only by virtue of its Torah," declared Rabbi Saadiah Gaon over a thousand years ago.[600] According to this view, a Jew is not a nationality, race, ethnicity, or culture, but rather someone who lives by the Torah.[601] However, many modern Jews do not see it this way; instead, they understand their Jewish identity as cultural or ethnic.

Israel—In the Bible, "Israel" usually refers to a people: Jacob's descendants as a collective, the Israelites. The name "Israel" was originally given to Jacob after he wrestled with a divine being; it is traditionally understood as "he who wrestles with God," from *sara* (to struggle) and *El* (God). The name "Israel" was later applied to the ancestral line.

Klal Yisrael—"The Whole of Israel"; the collective unity and shared responsibility of the Jewish people as a whole.

B'nai Yisrael—"The Children of Israel"; a biblical term referring to the Israelites, especially in the context of the Exodus and the covenantal narrative.

Am Yisrael—"The People of Israel"; Jewish identity and peoplehood, without a political meaning. "Am Yisrael Chai" (the people of Israel live) is used today as a Zionist slogan.

Who is a Jew, from a traditional perspective, is explained in more detail on the website of *Torah Jews*, an anti-Zionist Orthodox Jewish organization, as summarized next.

The Jews are a nation, but not in the modern sense of the word. Today, "nation" means a sovereign state. When the Torah used the word "am" (nation/people), it did not mean that. While they were still encamped in the desert, without a land of their own, the divine command told the Jews: "Today you have become a nation to the L-rd your G-d" (Deut. 27:9). It meant a people bound together by a shared divine mission. Without Torah, there is no Jewish nation.

Throughout history, Jews have lived around the world, speaking different languages and belonging to different cultural and ethnic groups. The fact that conversion to Judaism is possible shows that Jewishness is not racial. Anyone, from any race or background, can join the Jewish people by accepting the Torah and its commandments. Many of the most revered figures in Jewish history descended from converts. Zipporah, the wife of Moses; Rachav, who married Joshua; Ruth, the great-grandmother of King David; and Onkelos, the translator of the authoritative Aramaic Targum were all converts. Even prominent Talmudic sages such as Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Meir were traditionally said to descend from converts.

This classical Torah definition of Jewish identity was unchallenged until the rise of Zionism in the late nineteenth century. The founders of Zionism rejected the Torah and attempted to redefine Jewishness as a secular national identity, separate from religion. They wanted Jews to be "a normal nation," such as the European national movements of their time. To achieve this, they created a national culture, redesigned Biblical Hebrew into a modern secular language, and transformed the Holy Land into a secular state known as "Israel." They replaced "the People of the Book" with a political nationality and declared themselves "the nation of Israel," while openly abandoning the Torah that defines that nation. They wished to retain the title "Jew," yet rejected the very source that grants that identity.

Confusion over Jewish identity intensified with modern ideas of race and ethnicity, some pointing out that Jews share common DNA. True, most Jews come from two ethnic groups with similar DNA, Ashkenazi and Mizrahi/Sephardi. But this simply means that there have been relatively few converts over the centuries; it does not define what a Jew is. Jewishness is not determined by skin color, geographic origin, or genetic markers.

Jewish status is matrilineal: a Jew is someone born to a Jewish mother or someone who properly converts. The maternal line establishes Jewish status also for the children of converts. A common question often asked is: if Jewish

identity is defined by the Torah, why is someone born to a Jewish mother still considered Jewish even if they are completely non-observant or even deny the Torah? The answer lies in the distinction between halakhic status and spiritual standing. By halakhic definition, a person born to a Jewish mother is a Jew, regardless of personal beliefs. This is a permanent status. However, spiritual standing within the Jewish people is determined by belief and observance. A Jew who rejects the principles of Judaism is not considered part of the Jewish people in the spiritual sense, even though his halakhic status remains intact, concludes the *Torah Jews* article, citing the holy Rambam.[602]

Judaism

Judaism is commonly understood as a constellation of religious movements, each with its own internal subgroups and schools of thought. It is a monotheistic religion centered on belief in one God who made a covenant with the Jews, beginning with Abraham and fulfilled by Moses, revealed through the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) and rabbinic tradition. It's a complete way of life, encompassing theology, law (halakha), ethics, and shared history, emphasizing community, ethical conduct, and observance of God's commandments (mitzvot).

Jewish denominations—also referred to as streams, movements or branches—are primarily distinguished by their philosophical approaches to Jewish tradition and by how they interpret and adhere to traditional Jewish law.

Views differ on how these groups are defined and classified. A commonly used framework divides Judaism into Orthodox, Conservative (*Masorti*), Reform, and other smaller denominations. Within Orthodox Judaism, two major camps exist: Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) and Modern Orthodox (often referred to in Israel as *Dati*). Within Haredi Judaism itself, the two main subgroups are Hasidic and *Yeshivish*. The following structural overview is based on the transdenominational online resource *MyJewishLearning.com*.

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Jews are defined by adherence to Jewish law as derived from the Torah and rabbinic tradition, and by the belief in the binding authority of that law. Hallmarks of Orthodox religious life include strict observance of Shabbat and *kashrut* (dietary laws), daily prayer, study of Torah and Talmud, and commitment to rabbinic authority and communal religious norms. It is a broader category that can be divided as follows:

Haredi—Literally meaning "one who trembles [before God]," Haredi Jews, also called ultra-Orthodox, are typically marked by distinctive black hats and long coats (for men) and modest attire (for women). They are the most stringent in their commitment to Jewish law and tend to maintain the lowest levels of interaction with wider non-Jewish society. Haredi Jews can be further split into two principal groups:

> **Hasidic**—Meaning "pious," Hasidic Jews are heirs to a spiritual revivalist movement that began in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century and, drawing on Jewish mystical traditions (especially Kabbalah), emphasized direct communion with the divine through ecstatic prayer, joy in worship, and devotional practice. The movement comprises numerous distinct sects, most led by a hereditary charismatic rabbi, or *rebbe*, including Satmar, Chabad, Ger, and Skver.
>
> **Yeshivish**—Sometimes also known as *Litvish* (Lithuanian), these Haredi Jews are heirs to the *Mitnagdim* (literally "opponents"), who rejected the rise of Hasidic Judaism in Eastern Europe. This tradition has emphasized the intellectual and legal dimensions of Jewish life, particularly rigorous Talmud study for men. The term Yeshivish derives from yeshiva, meaning a religious seminary.

Modern Orthodox/Dati—In Israel, the non-Haredi Orthodox religious sector is referred to as Dati, while globally this group is usually called Modern Orthodox. Followers blend traditional halakhic observance with engagement in modern society. In Israel, its central

ideological stream is *Dati Leumi* ("National Religious"), which integrates Orthodox observance with Zionism and often views the modern State of Israel as a manifestation of divine providence. Adherents often wear a knitted skullcap (*kippah seruga*) and participate enthusiastically in national life, military service, and secular education alongside Torah study.

Conservative Judaism/Masorti

In Israel, Masorti is often used for "traditional" Jews: not Orthodox, but not fully secular. The Conservative/Masorti movement itself seeks to blend traditional Judaism with modern values, positioning itself as a middle ground between Orthodox and Reform Judaism. The movement permits certain innovations—such as driving to synagogue (but not for other purposes) on Shabbat and gender-egalitarian prayer in most North American Conservative congregations—while maintaining traditional positions on other matters, including kashrut and the prohibition of intermarriage (though policies and practice vary by community).

Reform Judaism

Dominant in the United States and well established in parts of Europe, Reform Judaism is small in size and officially unrecognized in Israel. This movement emphasizes the primacy of Jewish ethical principles over the binding authority of Jewish law. It has traditionally sought to adapt Jewish tradition to modern sensibilities, emphasizes personal autonomy in matters of ritual observance, and generally identifies with progressive and social-justice–oriented values. Reform Judaism is the largest Jewish denomination in the United States, with roughly 35 percent of American Jews identifying as Reform.

Other smaller denominations

Many other Jewish groups of different sizes and types exist worldwide. To conclude its overview of Jewish denominations, *MyJewishLearning.com* mentions three smaller progressive American movements, Reconstructionist Judaism, Jewish Renewal, and Humanistic Judaism.[603]

Hilonim

Hilonim, or *Hiloni* Jews, are Israeli Jews who are secular or non-religious, representing the largest Jewish subgroup in Israel (49%). While they may not believe in God or strictly follow religious law, many still observe certain traditions like keeping kosher or lighting Hanukkah candles for cultural or ancestral reasons.[604]

Jewish ethnic and cultural groups

As mentioned, according to the traditional definition a Jew is not a nationality, race, ethnicity, or culture: there are Jews of all nationalities, races, ethnicities, and cultures. The Jewish diaspora was extremely diverse; however, today many of its distinct cultures have been largely destroyed by mass migration to Israel and its assimilationist national identity. Synagogues stand empty or have already collapsed, dialects are going extinct, traditions and stories are forgotten. Losing this cultural diversity is a loss not only to Jews but also to humanity.

The main ethno-cultural Jewish groups include Ashkenazi (Central and Eastern European), Sephardi (Iberian), and Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jews. There are (or in some cases were) also Italian (Italkim), Greek/Balkan (Romaniote), Georgian (Kartveli), Mountain Jews (Juhurim) of the Caucasus, Bukharan of Central Asia, Yemenite (Teimani), Ethiopian (Beta Israel), Ugandan (Abayudaya), Nigerian (Igbo), Indian (Cochin, Bene Israel, Bnei Menashe, Baghdadi), and Chinese (Kaifeng) Jews. These groupings denote ethno-ritual and cultural traditions—such as liturgy, language, cuisine, and custom—rather than types of religious observance: members of these communities may follow different denominations.

There are certain predominant views on Zionism within some groups, but broadly denominational or ethno-cultural background does not automatically determine one's position.

Views on Zionism within Judaism

The concepts of the Land of Israel and the return from exile have existed in Jewish tradition for thousands of years, but until recently the Jewish community, in full agreement, understood this as a future event to occur with the coming of the Messiah at the "end of days." Until then, Jews were to live in exile; only at that time could they return en masse to the Land of Israel in the Ingathering of the Exiles. Then came the Zionist thought, that they themselves—humans—will create the Land of Israel and gather the Jews. In other words, they will carry out God's work. This view, not surprisingly, was widely rejected by religious Jews.

However, after the Shoah, the creation of the state of Israel, and the Six-Day War, religious Zionist voices got stronger who claimed redemption is upon the people. Today, three attitudes exist toward Zionism among religious Jews.

Traditional anti-Zionists view Zionism and the secular State of Israel as a rebellion against God's plan, because only the Messiah is supposed to end exile and restore Jewish sovereignty. They argue that trying to "force the end" (hasten redemption) violates Talmudic warnings. Many oppose participating in Israeli state institutions and view the state as illegitimate and spiritually harmful, even if they care deeply about the land and its holiness.

Pragmatic non-Zionists don't see the modern state as religiously legitimate but tend to treat it as a practical reality to be worked with, without attaching messianic or theological meaning to it.

Religious Zionists see the State of Israel as a positive religious event, often as "the beginning of the flowering of our redemption." They combine traditional observance of Torah with active support for the state and, often, Jewish settlements. For many, military service, building communities, and cultivating the land are understood as religious duties that help advance God's plan.

(2016 survey: in Israel, 63% of Hardei do not see themselves as Zionist, while 85% of Dati, 82% of Masorti, and 72% of Hiloni do.[605])

Historical opposition to Zionism

Since the earliest days of Zionism, some of the most prominent Haredi leaders have argued that their religious beliefs are fundamentally incompatible with the idea of Jewish nationalism. In 1912, an organization known as **Agudath Israel** was founded to unite observant Jews—particularly in Eastern Europe—in opposition to secular and Zionist ideologies. In Austria and Hungary, Orthodox rabbis forbade their followers from joining the Zionist movement. In Palestine, the **Eidah Chareidis** of Jerusalem was established as an alternative to the Zionist National Council, along with an independent rabbinate intended to counter Zionist leadership.[606]

One of the most important strands of anti-Zionist thought was pioneered by the late **Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum**, great-uncle of Rabbi Aaron and founder of the Satmar Hasidic movement. More than anyone else in the ultra-Orthodox community, Teitelbaum committed himself to a principled, religiously grounded anti-Zionism that had been widespread prior to the Shoah, writes *Vashti*, a leftist British Jewish media platform.

When Zionism emerged as a serious political movement in the late nineteenth century, most Orthodox leaders were quick to denounce it as a threat to religious values, consistent with their broader opposition to the reforms of Jewish modernity. **Rabbi Chaim Elazar Shapira**, the Munkacs Rebbe, claimed that Zionism was anti-messianic in nature because it assumed a return to the Land of Israel before the prophesied end times. Another important religious leader, **Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber Schneersohn**, the fifth Chabad Rebbe, also maintained that secular nationalism would undermine the long-awaited hope for a complete redemption brought about by God.

Teitelbaum was the first major religious thinker to transform these ideas into a fully fledged ideology in the years following the catastrophe of the Shoah and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel. In 1961, he published *VaYoel Moshe*, a polemic that denounced Zionism

as an act of religious heresy, on the grounds that it violates the Three Oaths, an ancient rabbinic concept described in the Babylonian Talmud, which has long been associated with traditional teachings on Jewish exile.

According to the Three Oaths, in order for the Jews to live in exile, they must not rebel against the nations of the world or force a collective return to the Land of Israel before the end times; in turn, the nations of the world are expected not to inflict excessive suffering upon the Jewish people.

In his writings, Teitelbaum articulates a consistent and uncompromising critique of Jewish nationalism. The Satmar Rebbe also challenged the notion that the state would ensure Jewish safety and flourishing. He rejected a Judaism shaped by militarism and false messianic hope, instead emphasizing that Jews should remain in the diaspora and continue living as they always had. He embraced an existential vision of exile in which geographic isolation from the Land of Israel in no way inhibits the ability to live full lives.

The Satmar Rebbe argued that the members of Orthodox communities like his were the last authentically practicing Jews left in the modern world, and thus bore a special responsibility to uphold the most rigorous understanding of Jewish law. Despite a growing sense that it was a losing fight, Teitelbaum held firm that Zionism should be resisted until the bitter end.[607]

It is important to note that the Satmar and similar groups' fierce opposition to the state of Israel is not directed against its secular nature or its laws but, rather, against its very existence, regardless of its character. In the words of the Satmar Rebbe, Yoel Teitelbaum, "even if the members of the Knesset were righteous and holy, it is a terrible and awful criminal iniquity to seize redemption and rule before the time has come."

According to this view, the concepts "Torah state" or "halakhic state" are oxymorons; any Jewish state created by humans prior to the messianic age lacks divine authority and therefore undermines the Torah and stands in opposition to halakha.[608]

The Three Oaths

The passage that warns against a collective return before the appointed time appears in Ketubot 111a, where a verse from *Song of Songs* is interpreted. Some interpretations frame the third oaths as "not to hasten the redemption."

1. Israel should not "storm the wall"—Jews should not forcefully retake the Land of Israel and end the exile;
2. Israel should not rebel against the nations—Jews should not rise up in armed revolt against the peoples among whom they live in exile;
3. the nations should not oppress Israel excessively—peoples among whom Jews live are forbidden from persecuting or mistreating Jews.

The oaths are understood as divine injunctions imposed by God. The third oath is directed at the nations (gentiles) among whom Jews live, because exile is understood as a mutual divine arrangement: Jews are commanded to accept the rule of the host nations, while the nations are commanded not to abuse their power over Jews.

Religious Zionists argue the oaths do not apply, either because the nations violated their oath first through excessive persecution (pogroms, Holocaust), or because it is *aggadic* (narrative) material rather than strict halakha (legal ruling). Anti-Zionists counter the first claim by arguing that the Midrash (rabbinic interpretation) does not present the oaths as a bilateral "contract" that becomes void if the nations sin. Regarding the other claim, they say that the Gemara (Talmud) itself treats the oaths as the basis of a halakhic dispute, and that non-inclusion in Rambam and *Shulchan Aruch* does not prove non-binding status. They further claim Rambam did regard them as binding (citing his *Letter to Yemen* and *Megillat Esther* on *Sefer HaMitzvot*), and argue the oaths are also implicit in Rambam's messianic framework: the Messiah gathers the exiles—therefore Jews may not "gather themselves" before him.[609]

Next are other relevant concepts that play important roles in the discussion about traditional Jewish perspectives on exile, redemption, and Zionism.

Redemption (*Ge'ulah*)

Distinct from political liberation, ge'ulah refers to a total divine transformation of history. It includes moral renewal, restoration of divine presence, and universal peace—not merely Jewish self-rule. Partial man-made "redemption" is therefore viewed as false and dangerous.

Jewish Sovereignty (*Malchut Yisrael*)

In classical Jewish thought, sovereignty is reserved for the messianic era and cannot be legitimately claimed during exile. Jewish self-rule during exile is therefore seen as illegitimate, regardless of intent or international recognition. Attempts to establish Jewish rule prematurely are viewed as "forcing the end," a violation of divine order.

Forcing the End (*Dehikat HaKetz*)

Often cited alongside the Three Oaths, "forcing the end" refers to attempts to hasten redemption through human or political action (such as mass migration or state-building), which are prohibited by Talmudic-era rabbinic teaching.

Exile (*Galut*)

The exile began after the destruction of the Second Temple and the Roman suppression of Judea in 70 CE. Beyond physical displacement, galut is viewed as a spiritual condition shaping Jewish existence. Many classical sources treat galut not as a mere historical event but as a divinely imposed state that governs Jewish life until redemption.

Ingathering of the Exiles (*Kibbutz Galuyot*)

A defined eschatological doctrine describing the collective return of Jews from exile at the end of days. In classical tradition, it is understood as a divinely orchestrated miracle accompanying redemption, rather than a human-driven political migration process.

The Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*)

The sacred land is central to Jewish covenantal memory, prayer, and law, associated with unique commandments tied to the land. However, in classical Jewish thought, the Land's significance is spiritual and covenantal, not political or national, and it was granted conditionally.

Restoration of Jerusalem (*Shivat Yerushalayim*)

Jerusalem is the spiritual center of Judaism and the focal point of Jewish longing, liturgy, and historical memory. Classical tradition links Jerusalem's full restoration (sovereignty, sanctity, and Temple service) to the messianic era rather than to pre-redemptive military and political action.

Temple Mount (*Har HaBayit*)

The holiest site in Judaism, traditionally governed by strict prohibitions on entry and ritual activity due to laws of ritual impurity. Classical authorities forbid prayer, sacrifice, or sovereignty claims at the site prior to messianic redemption, viewing such activism as religiously dangerous and a form of forcing the end.

Preservation of Life (*Pikuach Nefesh*)

Used by anti-Zionist thinkers to argue that nationalist conflict endangers life and therefore violates a supreme Torah value. War undertaken for ideological redemption is seen as especially illegitimate.

Desecration of God's Name (*Chillul Hashem*)

A classical Jewish concept invoked by anti-Zionists, who argue that violence, oppression, or moral compromise carried out by the State of Israel in the name of Jews profanes God's name, even if God is not explicitly invoked.

History of Religious Jewish Zionism

Long before a self-identified Jewish Zionist movement took shape, the earliest modern "Zionists" were Christians. From the 17th century onward, strands of Protestant Restorationism argued that the Jewish return to Zion was divinely ordained and a prelude to redemption. English Puritans and later evangelical thinkers read biblical prophecies as a geopolitical program; by the 19th century, figures such as **Lord Shaftesbury** in Britain, the Anglican chaplain **William Hechler**, and **American revivalists** behind the 1891 *Blackstone Memorial* lobbied statesmen to support Jewish resettlement in Palestine. It was a Christian eschatological expectation that helped normalize the idea that a Jewish polity in the "Land of Israel" belonged on the table of international affairs. The ideology of modern Zionism, in fact, is much more Christian than it is traditional Jewish.[610]

When Jewish Zionist politics finally emerged in the late 19th century, it was led largely by secular or non-observant Jews. The crucible was European nationalism, urbanization, and antisemitism. **Leon Pinsker**'s *Auto-Emancipation* (1882) sketched the logic of national self-determination. **Theodor Herzl**'s *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State, 1896) and the First Zionist Congress (1897) defined Zionism as a practical, diplomatic movement for a Jewish state. Early cadres included socialist labor Zionists, cultural Zionists, and liberals; many were indifferent or hostile to traditional religious authority. For them, the urgent task was establishing a secular state and a new identity. In short: the first Jewish Zionists—organizationally and ideologically—were mostly secular, and some were outspoken atheists.

Yet religious Jewish Zionism did not arrive as a mere afterthought. In fact, some voices predated Herzl. A small number of rabbis did indeed advocate Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, but even they explicitly prohibited a war to take over the land, such as took place in 1948.

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874) was one of the founders of the Chovevei Tzion movement, and in his 1862 book *Derishas Tzion* he wrote that Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael could be the beginning of the redemption. But he made clear that this did not include fighting wars and conquering the land by force, which would be prohibited under the oaths (Maamar Kadishin p. 35b).

Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (1798-1878) argued that human initiative—funding immigration, purchasing land, developing Jewish settlement, reviving agriculture, petitioning rulers—could begin the redemptive process.

Rabbi Yitzchok Yaakov Reines (1839-1915) was a leader of Chovevei Tzion and the founder of Mizrachi (an acronym for *Merkaz Ruchani*, "Spiritual Center"), a movement to fuse Torah observance with nation-building. In 1902 he published a book titled *Ohr Chadash Al Tzion*, calling for settlement in Eretz Yisrael, but cautioning (p. 240) that it must not violate the oaths.

Rabbi Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, in his book *Eim Habonim Smeicha* (written in 1943), encouraged settlement in Eretz Yisrael but forbids any war before the coming of messiah, calling it a violation of the oath against going up as a wall (ch. 3, p. 176).

It should be noted that even the movement of peaceful settlement that these rabbis advocated was opposed by the vast majority of the Jews at that time. The few who did initially support Chovevei Tzion eventually withdrew their backing when they saw the direction the movement was taking.[611]

The influence of these ideas grew significantly in the early twentieth century. Schools, youth movements, and political parties nurtured the Mizrachi spirit. The **Bnei Akiva** youth movement (founded 1929) and the **Torah va'Avodah** ("Torah and Labor") principle/slogan socialized youth into a synthesis of observance, national service, and pioneering ethos. They channeled this new identity into tangible projects, combining religious observance with the practical work of farming and building new communities.

The central theological architect of religious Zionism was **Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook** (Rav Kook, 1865-1935). He taught that even secular pioneers might be unwitting instruments of divine providence; their labor to reclaim the land could be part of a gradual, this-worldly redemption. This reframed the secular-religious divide: instead of condemning nonobservant Zionists, Kook valorized their nation-building as sanctified work. His approach gave religious commitment a confident, future-oriented language compatible with sovereignty, Hebrew revival, and state institutions.

But even Kook upheld the Three Oaths. In *Olas Re'iyah*, his commentary on the Siddur (prayer book), Rav Kook wrote in connection with the blessing over the Seven Species that we must achieve settlement of the land through love and peace, not to ascend as a wall and not to rebel against the nations of the world.[612]

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1982), the son, became the principal heir of Rav Kook's thought; a key difference was his view that the Three Oaths were no longer binding. After Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, he became a decisive bridge between early religious Zionist theology and the post-1967 settlement movement. He interpreted the return to the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem as a providential stage in redemption, reinforcing the view that relinquishing any part of the biblically promised land was not merely a political error but a religious violation. From his base at the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva in Jerusalem, he mentored a generation of students who carried this messianic-national reading into activism, helping to provide the religious language, leadership cadre, and moral certainty that would later shape the settlement movement.

The capture of the new territories supercharged messianic readings of history. The **National Religious Party** (NRP), formed by a merger of Mizrachi movements back in 1956, became a coalition kingmaker, participating in almost every government coalition up to 1992, after which it declined and disbanded in 2008, later merging into The Jewish Home (HaBayit HaYehudi) party.

The **hesder yeshivot** model, formalized in the 1960s, combined intensive Torah study with military service, creating a distinctive pathway that linked religious formation to national defense and public leadership. Over time, this network produced not only committed lay communities but also a steady stream of educators, officers, activists, and politicians who translated religious Zionist ideals into organized social power, particularly from the 1970s onward.

In the 1970s, the ultranationalist religious **Gush Emunim** ("Bloc of the Faithful") movement translated Rav Kook's ideas into an activist settlement project, pressing for permanent Jewish presence throughout the biblical heartland.

Since the 1990s, a new generation of radical religious Zionist settlers has emerged in the West Bank, often called the "**hilltop youth**." Inspired by Gush Emunim's messianic vision, they have pushed beyond existing settlements to create outposts, and are frequently attacking Palestinians. Though sometimes denounced by Israeli authorities, they enjoy IDF protection, public funding, and informal political backing. Many activists are young, non-working settlers, including numerous US-born Israelis.

Chabad (pronounced as kha-bahd) is a very influential Hasidic movement that deserves a few words. Built around an expansive outreach (*kiruv*) model, a network of thousands of Chabad Houses, schools, camps, and social-service centers covers the globe. Chabad is formally non-Zionist but is very supportive of the Zionist state and its military (members are often encouraged to serve in the IDF). They are free to vote as they wish (unlike many other Orthodox sects where all vote for one candidate) but are generally right-wing to varying extents. The movement's involvement in Israeli politics has grown more visible over the past decades, with Chabad activists believed to be behind the "Only Netanyahu Is Good for the Jews" placards in 1996,[613] and a more recent report by the Israeli investigative newsroom *Shomrim* alleging growing proximity between some Chabad circles and Itamar Ben-Gvir's far-right Otzma Yehudit party.[614]

Attempts to Incite Violence

The religious-nationalist far right has a long record of actions meant to inflame the conflict and sabotage compromise. Some plots sought mass casualties to spark a broader religious war or to upend the Temple Mount status quo; others aimed to terrorize daily life, drive displacement, or provoke revenge cycles that would bury diplomacy beneath insecurity. While Israeli governments routinely denounce such acts and courts have handed down significant sentences in a few cases, enforcement has been uneven, and regular leniency or delayed prosecutions have fed a perception of impunity.

The Jewish Underground (1979-1984)

The "Jewish Underground" (HaMakhteret HaYehudit) was a clandestine far-right network formed by militants associated with Gush Emunim in the late 1970s. Numbering only a few dozen operatives, it fused messianic-nationalist ideas with vigilante tactics aimed at reshaping the conflict's trajectory. Two shocks helped catalyze it: the Camp David process (1978-79), seen by its members as the opening to a Palestinian state, and growing anger over Palestinian attacks on Israelis. The Underground's core believed that audacious violence could terrorize Palestinians, intimidate Israeli decision-makers, and even trigger religious-symbolic upheaval that would realign public opinion.

The group drew on a current within religious Zionism that treated the land as a non-negotiable covenantal trust. Some leaders were influenced by thinkers who argued that bold human initiative could hasten redemption. Practically, the Underground set three "strategic" goals: (1) decapitating Palestinian municipal leadership in the West Bank, (2) altering the Temple Mount status quo through a spectacular attack on the Dome of the Rock/Al-Aqsa, and (3) mass-casualty terror to provoke communal rupture.

On 2 June 1980, the Underground launched synchronized car-bombings targeting West Bank mayors. Bassam Shakaa (Nablus) lost both legs; Karim Khalaf (Ramallah) lost a foot; another device badly injured an Israeli Druze police sapper while he examined a booby-trapped car intended for the Al-Bireh mayor. A school in Hebron was also hit that day. These attacks were designed to terrorize Palestinian civic leadership and warn Israel's government against concessions.

On 26 July 1983, Underground gunmen attacked students at the Islamic College in Hebron, firing automatic weapons and throwing a grenade; three students were killed and more than 30 wounded. The operation was framed internally as revenge and deterrence after the murder of an Israeli yeshiva student in Hebron. Courts later convicted three Underground members of murder for this attack.

The most cataclysmic plan, however, was the plot to blow up the Dome of the Rock. Their planners leveraged military know-how—several members were reserve officers or skilled in explosives—and they explored multiple attack modalities, including aircraft and large demolition charges against the Dome's structural supports. Israeli security officials later said the conspirators came disturbingly close to operational capability, experimenting with different methods (including a plane packed with explosives) and amassing significant stolen military ordnance. The intent was explicit: obliterate the mosque, "awaken" the nation, and clear the path—symbolically and politically—for a future Third Temple.

The network unraveled in April 1984, when the Shin Bet foiled a coordinated plan to bomb five East Jerusalem buses—devices had already been fixed beneath the buses and were timed for a busy Friday. Arrests swept up about 25 people, many with settlement leadership roles. Subsequent interrogations exposed the Temple Mount plot, the Hebron shooting, and the mayoral bombings. Trials in 1985 produced 15 convictions on various charges; three men—Menachem Livni, Shaul Nir, and Uzi Sharbaf—received mandatory life sentences for the Hebron murders, while others drew lesser terms for attempted murder, conspiracy, and weapons offenses.

Within a few years, the heaviest sentences were reduced. President Chaim Herzog commuted the life terms to 24 years (1987), then to 15 years (1988), then to 10 years (1989). With time off for good behavior, the three principal convicts were released in December 1990; many other defendants had been freed earlier. Their release drew criticism from across Israel's political spectrum and international observers, while parts of the settlement movement welcomed them home publicly.

The Underground marked a turning point in Jewish extremist violence: a small, ideologically driven cell willing to pursue mass-casualty, symbolic targets to force a new reality. The group ceased to exist by the mid-1980s, but its repertoire —targeting mayors, striking campuses, menacing sacred space—set templates that later vigilantes and terror cells sometimes echoed.[615]

Cave of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque massacre (1994)

On the morning of February 25, 1994—during Ramadan and the Jewish festival of Purim—Baruch Goldstein, a US-born physician living in the Kiryat Arba settlement and a follower of the banned Kach movement, entered the Ibrahimi Mosque/Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron with an army-issued rifle. He opened fire on hundreds of Muslim worshipers gathered for dawn prayers. Twenty-nine people were killed and well over a hundred were wounded before survivors overpowered and killed him. The attack was the deadliest single act of Jewish extremist violence of the period and a profound shock to Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Goldstein's act was widely understood as an attempt to ignite a broader religious war, derail the Oslo process then underway, and entrench Jewish control in Hebron by provoking spirals of retaliation and crackdown. The massacre immediately set off days of clashes across the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli forces, bracing for further violence, imposed curfews and closures; additional fatalities occurred in ensuing confrontations. Palestinian militant groups cited the massacre as justification for a new wave of attacks, including suicide

bombings later that spring, which in turn deepened cycles of fear and vengeance.

The Israeli government under Yitzhak Rabin condemned the attack unequivocally. Kach and its offshoots were declared terrorist organizations (reinforcing earlier bans), arrests were made of extremists expressing support, and steps were taken to curb incitement. At the same time, an official commission of inquiry examined security failures, the advance warning signs around Goldstein, and the handling of the site. One of the most consequential outcomes was a series of structural and administrative changes in Hebron: the holy compound itself was physically partitioned into separate Muslim and Jewish prayer areas, access was tightly regulated, and layers of checkpoints and armed patrols were added. International observers—under the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH)—were later deployed for periods to monitor tensions.

Goldstein's memory became a flashpoint. Fringe admirers attempted to portray him as a martyr; the state moved to suppress glorification, restrict commemorations, and dismantle elements of a shrine-like aura that had grown around his gravesite. Mainstream Israeli society, including most religious authorities, repudiated the act as a desecration of life and sanctity. Yet for many Palestinians, the massacre symbolized impunity and the asymmetry of power in Hebron, especially as movement restrictions and settlement expansion continued to shape daily life.

The site itself remains emblematic of the conflict's intimate entanglement of faith, history, and security. Revered by Jews and Muslims as the burial place of the patriarchs and matriarchs, it is now also a fortified space of partitions, schedules, and metal detectors. The 1994 massacre did not end Oslo, but it marked a grim inflection point: proof of how one extremist with a messianic-nationalist ideology could bend the trajectory of both peace efforts and communal relations, with consequences still visible in the city's streets and in the rules governing its holiest place.[616]

Bat Ayin Underground school-bomb plot (2002)

In May 2002, Israeli security services foiled a plan by a small extremist cell based in the Bat Ayin settlement (Gush Etzion) to carry out a mass-casualty bombing outside a Palestinian girls' school in East Jerusalem. The device—packed with explosives and shrapnel—was positioned near the school at a time calculated to coincide with student arrival or dismissal, maximizing fatalities and terror. Investigators later described the intent as twofold: to kill children and staff and to trigger a broader communal explosion that would sabotage any prospect of political restraint.

The plotters—religious-nationalist settlers influenced by militant, messianic currents—were arrested shortly after the device was planted. Interrogations and forensic work tied them to a self-styled "Bat Ayin Underground," which had explored additional attacks on Palestinian civilians and targets in Jerusalem. Prosecutors charged the men with attempted murder, membership in a terrorist organization, and a range of weapons and explosives offenses.

Convictions followed in Israeli courts, with substantial prison sentences that reflected the premeditation, the choice of a civilian school as the target, and the clear aim to inflame Jewish-Arab relations. The case underscored a hard reality: alongside Palestinian violence, Israel has also confronted Jewish extremist cells willing to pursue atrocity attacks to force history's hand—seeking, through deliberate provocation, to widen the conflict and recalibrate state policy.[617]

Church of the Multiplication arson (2015)

Before dawn on 18 June 2015, arsonists set fire to buildings at the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in Tabgha, on the Sea of Galilee—a revered Catholic pilgrimage site with fifth-century mosaics. Flames gutted parts of the monastery complex (offices, guest areas), injuring a monk and a volunteer from smoke inhalation.

Hebrew graffiti sprayed on a wall read a line denigrating "idols," signaling a nationalist-religious hate crime rather than a criminal dispute.

Israeli leaders, including the president and prime minister, condemned the attack; police and the internal security service treated it as Jewish extremist violence in the "price-tag" pattern targeting non-Jewish religious sites. The government later supported restoration efforts, and Christian, Jewish, and Muslim figures visited the site to express solidarity, underscoring the incident's interfaith repercussions.

Investigators arrested several far-right Jewish youths linked to hilltop/outpost circles. In 2017, an Israeli court convicted one defendant of arson and related offenses for the Tabgha attack; he received a multi-year prison sentence and court-ordered compensation to the monastery. Another suspect tied to extremist incitement in separate materials was prosecuted in a related track. The monastery reopened after extensive repairs, returning the compound to service for pilgrims and local worshipers.

The Tabgha arson crystallized several dynamics at once: a small but determined current of Jewish extremism willing to attack sacred places; the symbolic targeting of a high-profile Christian site to provoke outrage and damage Israel's interfaith standing; and the state's mixed posture of sharp condemnation paired with the ongoing challenge of deterring similar acts. In the wider pattern of church, mosque, and monastery vandalism and arson over the last decade, Tabgha stands out for its international resonance—an attack on a site synonymous with hospitality, shared landscape, and the fragile fabric of coexistence.[618]

Jack (Yaakov) Teitel attacks (1997-2008)

American-born immigrant Jack (Yaakov) Teitel waged a years-long campaign of Jewish extremist violence before his 2009 arrest. In 1997 he murdered two Palestinians—a taxi driver and a shepherd—acts he later confessed to and was convicted for. Through the 2000s he planted bombs and sent booby-trapped packages targeting civilians and perceived

"enemies": a 2008 explosive seriously wounded Prof. Zeev Sternhell, a prominent left-wing academic; another package maimed a Jewish teenager in Ariel. Additional devices and threats targeted police and LGBTQ/community figures. Tried in Jerusalem District Court, Teitel was found fit to stand trial, convicted in 2013 of multiple offenses including two murders and attempted murders, and sentenced to two life terms plus decades. His case became emblematic of homegrown Jewish terrorism aimed at sowing fear and polarizing society to derail coexistence and constrain political compromise.[619]

Ongoing settler violence

"Price-tag" campaigns by Jewish extremists—arson, vandalism, assaults—are meant to "exact a price" for opposition to outposts or for Palestinian violence.[620] Its most notorious escalation was the Duma arson murders (2015), when a Dawabsheh family home was firebombed at night, killing a baby and later both parents; a perpetrator was convicted of multiple murders. In 2023, after a Palestinian shooting, the Huwara rampage saw hundreds of settlers torch homes and cars, injuring residents—an episode which the Israeli army called a "pogrom" although they "did little to stop it."[621] But the settler violence—field burnings, stone-throwing, mosque/church arson—has been going on for a long time with the assistance of the Israeli army. Former IDF commander and deputy head of the Mossad, Amiram Levin, stated in 2023, before October 7, that there has been "absolute apartheid" in the West Bank for the past 57 years. During an interview with Kan Reshet Bet radio, he said it is "just like Nazi Germany."[622]

The religious right's most decisive blow against peaceful coexistence, however, was the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995.

Killing Rabin and the Prospect for Peace

On November 4, 1995, Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was killed by a Jewish religious extremist, and with him the peace process he started with the Oslo Accords in 1993. In Israel, the political confrontation line was drawn down the center. Half the country believed the peace process was a historic opportunity to normalize Israel's place in the Middle East and the world. The other half saw it as a disaster that threatened Israel's existence.

The perpetrator was Yigal Amir, a 25-year-old law student. Speaking during his arraignment, he explained that Jewish law required him to kill Rabin because the prime minister had "turned his people and his land over to the enemy." Authorities linked Amir to a fringe far-right group called Eyal, an offshoot of the banned Kach movement of the late US-based rabbi Meir Kahane. Avishai Raviv, who headed Eyal, acknowledged that Amir belonged to the group.

It was the first (and remains the only) assassination of an Israeli prime minister which had far-reaching effects on the Arab-Israeli peace process. Rabin became the second regional leader after Egypt's President Anwar el-Sadat to be slain by extremists from his own side for pursuing peace.

Make no mistake—Rabin was a hardened war general who famously ordered the crushing of bones of Palestinian detainees, and was, allegedly, involved in running death squads.[623] But he genuinely wanted peace, for which he paid the ultimate price.

In the months before the assassination, Rabin and his Labor government faced fierce right-wing opposition, especially since the September accord transferring West Bank authority to the PLO. He was repeatedly heckled, and security around him tightened amid open threats. Rabin endured intensifying attacks from settlers and other opponents, fueling debate over rising violence.

Just before walking to his car, Rabin told a radio reporter he believed most Israelis opposed the recent wave of

violence that threatened democratic values. Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu called the assassination "one of the worst tragedies in the history of the state of Israel, and even the history of the Jewish people."[624]

Incitements by Ben-Gvir

A month before the assassination, at a mass protest in Jerusalem headed by Netanyahu, Ben-Gvir distributed a photomontage of Rabin in an SS uniform. Shortly after that, he stole an ornament from Rabin's car, proudly declaring, "We got to his car, and we'll get to him too."

The assassin, Yigal Amir, testified that, en route to murdering Rabin at the peace rally, he heard that "Itamar Ben Gvir wants to kill Rabin during the rally," but laughed at the prospect, thinking Ben-Gvir was just "a little boy." [625]

Maybe he was at the time, but surely he grew up, and today, ironically, he is the police minister.

Alleged involvement by Netanyahu

Speaking on Israeli television just hours after her husband's burial, Leah Rabin said that the increasingly violent rhetoric of recent weeks had led to the assassination and placed responsibility on leaders of the mainstream political opposition, the *Tampa Bay Times* reported in 1995.

"There definitely was incitement which was strongly absorbed and found itself a murderer, who did this because he felt he had the support of a broad public with an extremist approach," Mrs. Rabin said.

Her remarks sparked a political storm, as Israel's leaders exchanged accusations over the role of inflammatory rhetoric, with supporters of Rabin's Labor Party directing particular blame at Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

"There was a Likud rally in Jerusalem not too long ago," Leah Rabin recalled. "They put the figure of Yitzhak, my husband, in the uniform of a Nazi leader and Mr. Netanyahu was there. He later talked against it, but he was there and he didn't stop it."

She said she considered refusing to shake hands with Benjamin Netanyahu at her husband's funeral but ultimately chose not to create a public scene. Instead, she said, she tried to remain "very cold to him, as cold as I could be."

She added: "He knew, and we both understood that we would have both loved to avoid shaking each other's hand."

Mrs. Rabin said the country had been covered with posters depicting her husband in an Arab headdress resembling that of Yasser Arafat, and complained that no one intervened to stop it.

She also recalled that Jewish extremists would gather outside her home in Tel Aviv every Friday afternoon, shouting insults at her husband for pursuing peace with the Palestinians.

"For weeks and weeks, every week they would come and wait for him and shout at him, 'Traitor, murderer,'" she said.

"Last Friday, when I got home at 3 o'clock," she said, "they said to me, 'Just wait. A year from now, in Kings of Israel Square, we'll kill you both. There you will be like Mussolini and his mistress. That's the way you will be in Kings of Israel Square.'"

The taunt proved grimly prophetic: Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated after the peace rally in Kings of Israel Square.

Netanyahu denied responsibility for inflammatory rhetoric, saying he had repeatedly acted to stop demonstrators who called Rabin a traitor and a murderer, and that accusations against him were "cynical incitement."[626]

"A War of Gog and Magog"

In an interview with Moshe Ya'alon in April 2023, the former Israeli Minister of Defense explained that the religious far right is itching to start a "big war" and that they are just waiting for an excuse. First, he explained that the ideology of these people is like the Nazis'.

> When you talk about Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, they have a rabbi. His name is Rabbi Dov Lior. He is the rabbi of the Jewish Underground that intended to blow up the Dome of Rock and, before that, the buses in Jerusalem. Why? In order to hasten the 'last war'… Read the article [Smotrich] published in 'The Shiloh' in 2017. First of all, this concept rests on Jewish supremacy – Mein Kampf in reverse… It is anchored in ideology.[627]

The article Ya'alon mentioned is an essay written by Bezalel Smotrich and published in the journal *Hashiloach* (often rendered "Shiloh") in September 2017, available in both Hebrew[628] and English.[629] Titled "Decisive Plan," it describes an "endgame" for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to the far-right lawmaker, who now serves as Israel's finance minister and the government's West Bank overlord, the inherent contradiction between Jewish and Palestinian national aspirations does not allow for any kind of compromise, reconciliation, or partition. Instead of maintaining the illusion that a political agreement is possible, he argued, the issue must be unilaterally resolved once and for all.[630]

This shows how unmasked the intention of ethnic cleansing is within Israeli public talk, but the scary part that resonates so much after October 7 is that the time they want to implement this plan seems to be now—even if it means provoking a major Middle East conflict. As Ya'alon explained in the interview:

> And then actually what he aspires to is as soon as possible to get to a big war, a war of Gog and Magog… How can you ignite it? A massacre like the Cave of the Patriarchs… This is what goes into the decision-making process in the Israeli government.[631]

The War of Gog and Magog is a prophetic apocalyptic battle described in the Hebrew Bible. In this vision, the prophet Ezekiel describes a future invasion of Israel by a coalition of nations led by "Gog, of the land of Magog." The invaders are ultimately defeated by divine intervention, and the prophecy concludes with Israel's vindication and the acknowledgment of God's power by the nations. In Jewish tradition, this war is often understood as a prelude to the Messianic Age, a future era of global peace and divine justice that will be ushered in by the arrival of the Messiah—a human leader descended from King David who will restore Israel, rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, and bring all peoples to recognize and serve one God.

For these people like Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, a big war in the Middle East is not a nightmare to avoid, but the fulfillment of a dream.

The Red Heifer and End Times Prophecies

On the 100th day of the war, Abu Ubaida, spokesman for Hamas's Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, released a recorded message framing October 7 in religious terms. Hamas has repeatedly described its war on Israel not in secular Western categories, such as resistance to colonialism, but as an attempt to defend Al-Aqsa, which is the third holiest place in Islam, and which, tradition holds, was the site of Prophet Muhammad's Night Journey and ascent to heaven. Abu Ubaida claimed Hamas acted amid a growing conviction that Jews were advancing toward a change on the Temple Mount that could endanger Al-Aqsa Mosque, clearing the way to build their Third Temple. According to Abu Ubaida, religious currents in Israel—including talk of the "red heifer"—signaled an imminent threat. What are these "red heifers," and why did Hamas consider them significant enough to cite as one reason for the October 7 attack?

> The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: 'This is a requirement of the law that the Lord has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke' — Num. 19:1-2

According to some religious Zionist views, such a red heifer is needed as a precondition for building the Third Temple in Jerusalem. It has to be sacrificed and burned, and the ashes used in a ritual purification ceremony.

Many of the fundamentalists, both Jewish and Christian, believe that we are living on the edge of human history, and that modern events in the Middle East are fulfillments of prophecies made thousands of years ago. These prophecies require three great events before the Messiah can return: the restoration of the nation of Israel; Jerusalem becoming a Jewish city; and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. According to these views, two of these conditions have been met in the last seventy-seven years: Israel was created in 1948, and Jerusalem became Jewish in 1967. Only constructing the Temple remains, for which the sacrificial red heifer is needed.[632]

There are evangelical Christian groups cooperating with Jewish groups in Israel, such as The Temple Institute, to usher in this time. The Institute has been training men to be priests for the occasion for decades, and in September 2023, it announced the birth of a suitable heifer that it said would undergo "extensive examination" to determine if it is free from any blemish.[633]

For them, a heifer that satisfies the precise criteria is expected to play a decisive role in a national purification rite. In this view, sacrificing the heifer and using its ashes in the prescribed ceremony would remove ritual impurity and thereby open the way for Jews from everywhere to enter the holiest precincts associated with the Temple Mount. A suitable red heifer is thus treated not as symbolism but as a necessary step within a larger religious timetable.

Muslims see these actions as provocations and widely believe that the goal is to clear the Temple Mount of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, to make room for the Temple. They believe these acts are supported by the Israeli government, even if officially denied. It's hard to argue with this claim when many things point in this direction.

According to the Israeli non-profit organization Ir Amim, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, and Ministry of Heritage are all directly involved in the red heifer project. The Ministry of Agriculture assisted in circumventing regulatory protocols when initially seeking permission to import American red heifers, an example of

increasing government involvement as the US was not a country approved for the import of live animals at the time. Furthermore, it appears that the ministry likewise deviated from protocol by allowing the import of the cows without the required installation of a chip in their ears, since according to Jewish law, piercing the cow's body constitutes a deformity that disqualifies it from serving as a "red heifer" for ritual purification.

Concerning the Ministry of Heritage, it now has authority over the Israel Antiquities Authority and close ties with the archaeology department in the Civil Administration. This ministry is headed by Minister Amichai Eliyahu, a member of the Otzma Yehudit party, whose members are vocal supporters of the so-called temple movements.

It should be noted that such government assistance began under the former Bennett-Lapid government, which branded itself as much more moderate.[634]

Aviv Tatarsky, a senior Ir Amim researcher, told *Al Jazeera* that in Jewish religious texts, a lot of the details around sacrificing and burning a red heifer are ambiguous.

Tatarsky said he does not believe the red heifer ceremony or the construction of the Temple will happen "any time soon." He added that, despite state support for a Jewish presence in Al-Aqsa, he does not believe there is strong enough backing from the government for a group to try to destroy Al-Aqsa, which is subject to numerous agreements and regulations.

As for the heifer sacrifice, "they need recognition of a very wide public and of decision-makers and all kinds of important rabbis. If they just do it, it won't be recognized, and all their effort will be for nothing."

"I don't underestimate the danger of these groups, [but] building the temple means a completely different Israel from today."[635]

To counter Tatarsky's points, perhaps there is greater support by the public, decision-makers, and rabbis than he thinks; perhaps it is already a "completely different Israel" in which these kinds of things can happen.

And this is exactly what a *Jewish Press* article points out—how misled and naive the Jewish liberals are—when the American Zionist news outlet writes in all-caps:

"THE ARABS KNOW WHAT SECULAR JEWS DON'T"

It is quite a revolting piece of writing, with a language of racism and incitement, but it shows exactly how the religious Zionist far right thinks.

While many Israelis have no connection to the message of Jewish redemption, and regard the story of those red heifers from Texas as an oddity, writes the *Jewish Press*, "the Arabs get it."

> From scholars to murderers (which are often the same), the Arabs feel exactly what many religious Jews feel – that history as we know it will end on the Temple Mount, and the game changers are, among others, unprecedented Jewish presence on the Temple Mount, and the red heifers. Because after being purified from the impurity of the dead with the ashes of the red heifer, the crowds of Jews who will celebrate the Passover sacrifice on the Temple Mount will be bigger than the crowds at the priestly blessing by the Kotel.
>
> Our Jewish-Zionist response (Hey, we're all Jewish Zionists, just like Grandpa Yaakov and Uncle Moshe) must be to intensify the anxieties of the Arabs, scholars and murderers alike: show up in droves on the Temple Mount, carry out the Passover sacrifice in public, throw fear in their black hearts.[636]

Who shall we believe? Those nice leftist-liberals like Aviv Tatarsky who claim that everything is fine despite all appearances, or the loud and ugly voices that tell you honestly about their aims?

End Times Views in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

The concept of the "End Times" (known as eschatology) refers to beliefs about the ultimate destiny of humanity, the world, and the divine plan, including events like judgment, resurrection, and a new era of peace. These ideas vary across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the three major Abrahamic faiths, but share common themes like a messianic figure, final judgment, and resurrection.

Jewish eschatology, known as the "End of Days" (*aharit ha-yamim*), describes a future messianic era rather than a catastrophic apocalypse. It centers on the arrival of the Messiah (*Mashiach*), who will usher in a time of universal peace, the ingathering of Jewish exiles to Israel, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the resurrection of the righteous. Orthodox Jews view this as a literal future event, while some Reform perspectives interpret it more symbolically as human progress toward justice.

Christian end times teaching centers on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, often associated with tribulation, the rise of the Antichrist, and apocalyptic signs such as conflict, calamity, and moral decay. Views differ by denomination: premillennialists tend to expect a literal end times sequence, amillennialists interpret the millennium and many end-time images symbolically, and postmillennialists anticipate a long-term gospel-driven transformation before Christ's return.

In Islam, the end times (*Qiyamah* or *Yawm al-Qiyamah*, Resurrection/Day of Resurrection) involve moral decline, major trials, the appearance of the Mahdi and the return of Jesus (*Isa*), followed by divine judgment and the resurrection of all humanity.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share similar end times visions as they draw from overlapping biblical traditions: divine judgment, resurrection of the dead, moral reckoning, and a final restoration all relate to shared prophetic concepts and narratives described in the Hebrew Bible.

Within the Abrahamic religions, differing conceptions exist regarding the end of history and the final redemption. Let's begin with Judaism and outline its main views.

JUDAISM

Biblical and rabbinic sources describe the End of Days only in broad terms, and it remains shrouded in mystery. Many rabbinic sources state that the exact timing and details are deliberately concealed by God to prevent speculation and false calculations. According to the Talmud, those who "calculate the end" are condemned, and Maimonides urges focusing on mitzvot and ethical repair, not dates. Rather than presenting a single, fixed eschatological doctrine, Jewish tradition offers a framework composed of scriptural passages, rabbinic teachings, and later interpretations. Significant differences exist between views on the precise nature of the events, their sequence, and their meaning. The following is a generally accepted outline of the major themes and events as understood within classical Jewish thought.

Timeline of events according to Judaism

The opening upheavals are known as ***Chevlei ha-Mashiach***, the "birth pangs of the Messiah." Like contractions preceding birth, they are characterized by moral confusion, fear, social instability, and spiritual disorientation —conditions that force individuals and societies to confront what truly matters. Scripture and rabbinic literature describe the signs of this period, but provide no fixed timetable.

When divine redemption draws near, the first clear signal is **Elijah's herald**. The prophet returns not merely as a messenger, but as a restorer of clarity and order. Long-standing uncertainties within Jewish life—such as questions of lineage, priestly status, and unresolved legal disputes—are settled under his guidance. According to tradition, he helps prepare a renewed Sanhedrin (the supreme Jewish legal court) and a nation capable of moving forward without internal division or confusion.

Around this era occurs the **War of Gog and Magog**, described as a final confrontation against Israel that is ultimately overturned by divine intervention. The nature of this conflict remains shrouded in mystery. Rabbinic sources express uncertainty regarding many of its details: "whether Gog and Magog are the names of nations or individuals, whether this battle will be a physical or spiritual battle, and even whether it has already occurred or not."[637] The traditional view warn against mapping this war onto current geopolitics; its significance is understood primarily in theological rather than predictive terms.

According to some traditions, a central figure associated with the war is ***Mashiach ben Yosef***, a forerunner messianic figure descended from the tribe of Joseph, who precedes the final redeemer and prepares the way. Accounts of his role and fate vary. Some sources state that he will be killed during the conflict, followed by a period of national mourning, while others debate whether this "death" is to be understood literally, or as a spiritual struggle against the forces of evil. Still other traditions question whether he dies at all.

Following the defeat of Gog and Magog, a new phase begins, known as ***atchalta de-geulah***—the "beginning of redemption." In classical Jewish thought, this culminates in the arrival of the true Messiah and the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The final redeemer, ***Mashiach ben David***, is understood to be a fully human king, descended from King David. He is faithful to the Torah of Moses and is recognized through the guidance of Elijah the Prophet and the lawful authority of the restored Jewish court.

With the arrival of the king, the great homecoming begins: the **Ingathering of the Exiles**. Jews return from every corner of the earth, and even the Ten Lost Tribes are gathered. This return is not understood as a human project of nation-building, but as the fulfillment of a divine promise, realized in God's appointed time.

Under the Messiah's leadership, the **Third Temple** is established in Jerusalem as the central place of worship. Jerusalem itself is restored, becoming once again the spiritual

heart of the Jewish people. The Temple serves not only as a physical structure, but as a focal point for divine service, justice, and moral order. From Zion, instruction and guidance extend outward, and the city becomes a place of unity, peace, and reverence rather than division.

Once the Temple stands, attention turns to the **Red Heifer** (*parah adumah*). Its ashes, prepared in accordance with biblical law, are used to remove ritual impurity arising from contact with the dead, thereby enabling priests and worshipers to participate properly in Temple service. This purification restores the conditions required for lawful worship, allowing the sacrificial service and pilgrimage festivals to resume in their full form.

After these events, the world enters the **Messianic Age**. Life continues on earth—people work, raise families, and study—but the moral and spiritual atmosphere is transformed. Justice is restored to the courts, the vulnerable are protected, warfare ceases, and "the knowledge of God" becomes widespread. This period is not a cosmic ending, but a healed order: the world as it was always meant to be: secure, peaceful, and directed toward goodness.

In God's time, the blessing extends even beyond the grave in the **Resurrection of the Dead** (*Techiyat ha-Metim*). The righteous are restored to life, affirming divine justice and the faith placed in it. While sources differ regarding the precise order and manner of this resurrection, the shared conviction remains clear: God's mercy and judgment are complete and lacking in nothing.

Beyond the Resurrection lies ***Olam Ha-Ba***, the "World to Come." Unlike the Messianic Age, which unfolds within history, Olam Ha-Ba represents the ultimate spiritual reality beyond time and physical existence. It is not described in concrete terms, for it lies outside human language and experience. Jewish tradition therefore speaks of it not as a place, but as a state of closeness to God—complete, enduring, and free of suffering or injustice. In this final condition, creation reaches its purpose, and the relationship between God and humanity stands fully realized.

Non-Zionist versus Zionist views

The major difference between traditional anti-Zionist and non-Zionist Jewish views on the one hand, and religious Zionist interpretations on the other, lies not in the events themselves, but in the role assigned to human activity within the redemptive process.

Classical Judaism maintains that events of the End of Days are initiated and completed by God through the Messiah, not by political or military means. Developments such as territorial control or mass immigration are viewed as having no connection to messianic redemption. Human attempts to initiate redemptive milestones in advance are seen as a form of "forcing the end," a stance against which the Talmudic Three Oaths warn.

Religious Zionism, by contrast, interprets modern history as an active arena of redemption. While not denying the future coming of Mashiach ben David, many religious Zionists argue that redemption unfolds gradually through human action guided by divine providence. In this view, the establishment of the State of Israel is not merely a political event but a significant redemptive step. Likewise, the large-scale immigration of Jewish communities to Israel is interpreted as the part of the Ingathering of the Exiles.

Concerning the Third Temple, sharp divisions exist even within Zionist thought. Some oppose Temple-related activities altogether, others agree with limited activity under strict halakhic guidelines, while more radical groups advocate preparatory or even active steps toward its construction. According to the latter minority view, practical steps such as education, training kohanim, crafting ritual implements, and mapping Temple procedures are not only permitted but obligatory. Obtaining a suitable Red Heifer is part of this effort. These religious radicals believe that once the animal is sacrificed and the purification ritual is performed, even the rebuilding of the Third Temple could begin here in our lifetime. A very dangerous position, given that pursuing it would require the removal of the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque.

CHRISTIANITY

Across Christianity, there are different views of end times, and they tend to align with larger church families.

Amillennial views, held by traditions such as Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, reject the idea of the "Millennium," a future 1,000-year earthly reign of Christ. They read Revelation's "millennium" as symbolic of the present church age. Many mainline Protestants—Lutheran, Reformed/Presbyterian, Methodist, much of Anglican—are also largely amillennial today (though some Reformed circles lean partial-preterist, and older Reformed writers included postmillennial voices).

Postmillennial views expect that Jesus will return *after* a long era of moral progress—the Millennium—brought about through human effort and Christianization of society. Many apocalyptic signs are read as figurative or largely fulfilled; there's no fixed seven-year Tribulation. The Second Coming brings the general resurrection and final judgment. This view survives as a minority mainly in parts of the Reformed world (some Presbyterians/Reformed Baptists).

Premillennial views, by contrast, hold that Jesus will return *before* the Millennium, after worsening conflict and upheaval. A large share of conservative/evangelical Protestantism—such as Baptist, independent Bible churches, Pentecostal/charismatic (e.g., Assemblies of God, Calvary Chapel), and many non-denominational churches—leans this way. Some evangelicals are historic premillennial (similar sequence, but the church endures the Tribulation). Adventist traditions are premillennial with distinctive historicist readings and a post-Tribulation Second Coming (no rapture).

Jehovah's Witnesses and Latter-day Saints have their own unique timelines. In the Black church, views vary by stream: Pentecostal/Holiness bodies often skew premillennial, while historically mainline Black denominations may be more amillennial or symbolic in emphasis. Christian Zionists are typically evangelical premillennialists who see modern Israel as prophetically significant, though support for Israel also exists outside that framework.

Important to note, the terms premillennial, amillennial, and postmillennial label timelines, while "Christian-Zionist" and "evangelical" label communities/commitments that may overlap with different timelines.

Christian Zionists believe modern Israel plays a positive, prophesied role in God's plan. Many expect a future Tribulation, a literal Antichrist, an Abomination of Desolation in a rebuilt Temple, and a literal Millennial reign centered on Jerusalem. Others support Israel biblically or ethically without adopting the full prophetic timetable.

Evangelical describes a movement (across many denominations) centered on the authority of Scripture, the necessity of new birth, the cross of Christ, and active mission —not a single end-times scheme. Many evangelicals in the English-speaking world are dispensational premillennialists, but plenty are historic premillennial, amillennial, or postmillennial. Within evangelical premillennialism, rapture timing is a major internal difference.

Most **American evangelical Christians** believe in the second coming of Jesus and that it will usher in a thousand years of peace and harmony. Before that, however, there will be seven years of tribulation: the Antichrist will appear, and the forces of good and evil will wage a cataclysmic struggle, culminating in Jesus' defeat of the false Messiah. Many evangelicals believe that Jews and other non-Christians will suffer for accepting the Antichrist as their messiah—that most of them will perish in the coming struggle, but those who survive will finally acknowledge Jesus as their savior. True Christians will be spared these catastrophes, because they will have been raptured—snatched directly into Heaven —before the troubles begin. They will return to act as priests during Christ's millennial reign. At the end of that time, Satan will rally the forces of evil for a final confrontation with Jesus and the saints of the Church. The satanic warriors, led by a prince named Gog, will come from the north, from a land called Magog; God will destroy them, however. The dead will rise for their day of judgment, and a New Jerusalem will descend from the sky. Once again, God will dwell among his people.[638]

Timeline of events according to Evangelical views

The story begins with the **Rapture**. In their common view, Jesus gathers living and dead believers to Himself in a sudden "catching up," removing the church from the earth before God's judgments fall. This rescue is not the end of history; it is the moment that clears the stage for the final drama centered on Israel and Jerusalem.

Then a coalition led by **Gog of Magog** invades Israel, but God destroys them with earthquake, hail, and fire (Ezek. 38-39). (Some place it later or identify it differently.) Seven months of burial and seven years of burning weapons follow.

With the church gone, a charismatic world figure rises—the **Antichrist**. He promises order in a shattered world, forges sweeping alliances, and brokers what appears to be peace. This is the beginning of the seven-year **Tribulation**, a period of escalating judgments often divided into two halves. Usually placed before or by its midpoint, the **Third Temple** is expected to be rebuilt in Jerusalem, and, for some, the **Red Heifer** becomes a practical concern that would allow Temple rites to resume. The point is not the heifer itself so much as what it signals: renewed worship on the Temple Mount and the prophetic stage reset in Israel's capital.

At the opening of the Tribulation, the **Four Horsemen**—conquest, war, famine, and death—appear, initiating the sequence of **Seals** in Revelation. These are not random disasters; they are ordered judgments that reveal the fragility of human power and the certainty of God's plan. As the Seals continue, the world staggers under mounting pressure, and the Antichrist consolidates control.

Midway through the Tribulation comes the turning point Jesus warned about: the **Abomination of Desolation**. The Antichrist desecrates the rebuilt Temple—ending sacrifices and exalting himself in a blasphemous act that triggers the most severe period, the "Great Tribulation." Alongside him stands the **False Prophet**, a second beast who performs deceptive signs and enforces global allegiance. **The Mark**, known as "666," becomes a mechanism of worship and economic control: those who refuse it cannot buy or sell.

Judgments intensify. After the Seals come the **Trumpets**, then the **Bowls**—cascading plagues, darkness, poisoned waters, scorching heat, and global upheaval. Nations rage, the Antichrist gathers his armies, and events converge on the land of Israel for the final confrontation commonly called **Armageddon**. The term refers to a location (*Har Megiddo*, or "Mount of Megiddo") overlooking the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel.

At the crisis point, heaven opens. The **Second Coming of Jesus** ends the war in an instant. Christ appears visibly, destroys the Antichrist and his forces, delivers Israel, and vindicates those who refused the mark. Satan himself is seized at this moment—the **Binding of Satan**—so he can no longer deceive the nations. The age of confusion closes, and a new administration begins.

That administration is the **Millennium**, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. In this view, the promises made to Israel—land, peace, restored worship—find literal fulfillment. The nations learn righteousness, justice is swift, peace is the norm, and the knowledge of God covers the earth. Christian Zionists emphasize that this is an earthly era: Jerusalem is central, Israel's calling is honored, and the nations gather to learn the ways of the Lord.

Yet even after a thousand years of righteous governance, the human heart—where it has not been renewed—can still be stirred. When Satan is briefly released, he leads a final insurrection known again as **Gog and Magog** (Rev. 20). It ends as quickly as it begins: God crushes the revolt, and evil is finished forever. What follows is universal accountability: the **Resurrection** and **Final Judgment**. All the dead stand before God; the books are opened; those written in the Lamb's Book of Life enter eternal life, and those who rejected Him face judgment at the **Great White Throne**.

The story closes not with annihilation but renewal. God unveils the **New Heavens** and **New Earth**, and the **New Jerusalem** descends like a bride—radiant and welcoming, the dwelling of God with humanity. Death, sorrow, and pain are gone. The river of life flows, the tree of life heals, and the people of God worship without fear or end.

The power of American Evangelical Christians

How seriously should these evangelical Christians be taken? According to Christians United for Israel (CUFI), they alone have 10 million members,[639] and in total there are around 80 million evangelical Christians in the US.[640] They represent about a quarter of voters and have an enormous influence over US politics. They are in the White House, the Congress, government institutions, and the military.

Al Jazeera's *Witness* documentary series produced a film about the power of the evangelical Zionist-Christian lobby, titled *Praying for Armageddon*. The first episode goes inside the evangelical Christian movement to explore its influence on US democracy and foreign policy. The Christian right has a political apparatus that's very efficient and influential, even if it's often behind the curtain. Without the "bedrock Evangelical voter no Republican anywhere in America for any office gets elected"—from Richard Nixon, through Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, to Donald J. Trump. It was with their blessing that the Trump administration controversially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved the US embassy there in 2018.[641]

The second episode of *Praying for Armageddon* examines the influence of evangelical Christian missionaries in the US military. Michael L. "Mikey" Weinstein is the founder and president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), aimed at restoring "the obliterated wall separating church and state in the United States armed forces."[642] According to him, new recruits are "dehumanized and marginalized for not being Christian enough" unless they join the evangelical groups. Their ranks reach the highest level: Jerry Boykin, former three-star general, believed that when Jesus comes back, he'll be carrying an AR-15.

Weinstein explained the different missionary groups inside the army, the Christian symbolism and crusader iconography in military patches and equipment. "All stuff like this does is completely motivate the recruiting efforts of Boko Haram, al-Qaeda, ISIS, Taliban. How do they refer to America? The crusaders."

Another retired US Army officer, Colonel Larry Wilkerson, who was an advisor to Colin Powell, remarked: "The most vivid danger in all of this, I think, is the special relationship with Israel… They are looking for the US relationship with Israel ultimately to bring about Armageddon and the rapture and Christ's thousand-year reign."

Frank Schaeffer, a former evangelical preacher and son of famous evangelical theologian Francis Schaeffer, said there are two "Armageddon lobbies" in the world. There is the extreme Islamic Armageddon lobby that believes in a final conflict between Islam and everyone else. And then there is the Armageddon lobby of American evangelical Christians. They want a final conflict with all other religions, all other political points of view. "They see it as us versus them. True Christians versus everyone else," Schaeffer explained. "We don't want peace. We being evangelicals, we want Armageddon. Bring it on. Their view of Zionism is apocalyptic. So when Israel is finally attacked by, say, a nuclear-armed Iran, that suits them fine. It's exactly what they're prophesying. Then we'll have a big last battle, Jesus comes back, and we're all going to heaven."[643]

One of the most bizarre aspects of the radical Zionist Christian and Zionist Jewish alliance is that their respective end-times visions imagine profoundly negative outcomes for one another. According to these apocalyptic Christian interpretations, most Jews (and other non-believers) will be executed by Jesus in a big bloodbath (Rev. 14:20, 19:13, 15); only those who convert to Christianity will survive in the event known as the "Conversion of Israel." On the other hand, many religious Zionists believe that in the End Times, non-Jews may live under Jewish rule if they accept the seven Noahide laws, but in a subordinate legal-political status called *ger toshav* (resident non-Jew) or as *goy she'kibel alav sheva mitzvot* (a non-Jew who accepts the seven laws but is not a resident); those who don't accept this format will face destruction in a final divine judgment.

ISLAM

There's more than one version in Islam, but the core pieces overlap: the Mahdi, al-Dajjal (Antichrist), the return of Isa (Jesus), Yajuj and Majuj (Gog and Magog), the Trumpet, Resurrection, and Judgment. Details and sequence vary across traditions and scholars.

Sunni views: widely share the Major/Minor Signs list, expect a future Mahdi (not yet born/known), Dajjal's appearance, then Jesus's descent, who kills Dajjal, followed by Gog and Magog and events leading to the Resurrection. Salafi/traditional scholars read this literally; some modernists take parts symbolically. Exact order and timing differ by hadith interpretation.

Shia views: Twelver (*Imami* or *Imamiyyah*) beliefs center on the Hidden Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, the last in a line of twelve imams descended from Ali. He's already alive in occultation and will reappear near the end times. Jesus also returns and supports him. Other Shia (e.g., *Ismaili*) have distinct emphases. *Ahmadiyya* uniquely teach that the promised Messiah/Mahdi has already come (Mirza Ghulam Ahmad), so they interpret many signs non-literally.

Timeline of events according to Islam

In Islam, the end of history is not a fixed date but a path marked by signs. It begins quietly with the **Minor Signs**—the long drift of the world away from faith and fairness. Trust erodes, greed grows bold, knowledge is misused, and violence feels common. Families fray, leaders fail, and people argue about religion more than they live it. These signs tell believers to steady themselves, to keep prayer and charity alive while the world grows noisy.

Then the pace quickens. In the **Appearance of the Mahdi**, Sunni narrations speak of a righteous leader from the Prophet's family who will rise when confusion is deepest. He will unite Muslims, end rampant injustice, and restore equity. In Shia belief, this promised figure is the **Hidden Imam**, already alive but in occultation, who will return by God's will

to lead the community. However they tell it, both paths describe a just guide whose arrival gathers the faithful and steadies public life before the final storms.

One of those storms has a name: **al-Dajjal**, the Antichrist. He is a master of deception who travels quickly, dazzles with feats that look miraculous, and demands worship. His trial is not only political; it is spiritual pressure designed to make people mistake spectacle for truth. Dajjal tests hearts by offering easy answers, quick food in famine, and safety at the price of loyalty to falsehood. Believers are warned to keep clear, to remember God's names, and to know that dazzling power is not proof of right.

The turning point is the **Descent of Isa** (Jesus). In Islamic belief, Jesus did not die on the cross; God raised him, and he will return near the end. He descends, prays with the community, and kills Dajjal, ending the liar's reign of confusion. Then he rules with justice, confirms pure monotheism, and sets disputes right. Under his leadership, peace spreads, and even deep resentments cool. It is a time of fairness that feels like relief after a fever.

But another wave rises: **Yajuj and Majuj** (Gog and Magog). These vast peoples surge forth, swarming across the earth, overwhelming human defenses, and devouring resources. Their onrush is beyond human strategy, and the story ends by God's direct help. When they are removed, the world breathes again. For a while, the earth enjoys calm and plenty, and justice is normal.

As the end draws near, further unmistakable **Major Signs** occur. Many scholars present them in a cluster, and their exact order is discussed, but a common telling moves like as follows. First, the **Sun rises from the West**, a stunning reversal that signals the moral window is closing; from that day, repentance is no longer accepted as it once was. Then the **Beast of the Earth** appears, addressing people and marking the difference between sincere faith and stubborn denial. It is a public sign that the hour is no longer far.

Another sign is the **Smoke** (*Dukhan*)—a great haze that covers the earth and afflicts people, a warning that no one can ignore. The ground itself then bears witness in the **Three**

Great Landslides: one in the East, one in the West, and one in the Arabian Peninsula. These are not everyday tremors; they are collapses that underline how fragile human certainty has always been. Finally, a **Fire from Yemen** rises and drives people toward the place of gathering, like a shepherding force that no one can resist. By now, no one is asking whether the end will come. Everyone feels it.

The passage between worlds is marked by the **Trumpet blown** by the angel Israfil, at God's command. With the first blast, life as we know it ends and all living die. With the second, creation stands again: the **Resurrection**. Every soul who has ever lived is raised and assembled for **Judgment Day**. Deeds are weighed with perfect justice and perfect knowledge. People face the truth of their lives: what they believed, what they loved, whom they helped or harmed when no one else was watching. The Sirat—a bridge over Hell—is crossed by God's permission, intercession occurs by God's leave, and no one is wronged. According to Islam, on Judgment Day everyone is judged based on faith (belief in God), intentions, and actions. Not all non-Muslims are automatically condemned; some interpretations hold that monotheists (Christians, Jews) may be saved if they sincerely believed in God and were just. Qur'an 2:62 says, "Those who believe, and the Jews, and the Christians... they shall have their reward with their Lord."

At last comes the permanent horizon: **Paradise and Hell**. Paradise is not a metaphor for a good feeling; it is a true home—gardens, rivers, welcome, and nearness to God. Hell is not an idea about regret; it is a real punishment, the consequence of choosing falsehood, cruelty, and arrogance against clear warnings.

Across Sunni and Shia tellings, the pieces are shared; the differences are about identification and sequence—whether the Mahdi is future or hidden, how literally to read certain portents, which sign comes first among the last great markers —but the path points in the same direction.

Is This the War of Gog and Magog?

While in Judaism the War of Gog and Magog only appears once, in Ezekiel 38-39, in Christianity it is mentioned once more, in Revelation 20:7-10. Some people even confuse it with Armageddon, another major war of the End Times. In either case, according to mainstream opinions, these wars will be in the future, but there are also voices that claim the Hamas-Israel conflict is already the beginning and that it is going to reach a global scale—WWIII on a biblical level.

> Never in the history of the world have all the players been on the stage: Iran, Russia, China, Europe, America. Everything is absolutely perfect. The final battle for global supremacy will be the mother of all wars at Armageddon. … World war so bloody that the blood of those killed in battle flows up to 200 miles to the bridal of the horse. When you see these signs, when you see nations against nations, when you see the moral collapse of America, when you see these things, the Apocalypse is coming.[644]

The most shocking part is that some of them actually want it happen, like influential pastor and founder of CUFI, John Hagee, whose quote was mentioned above. He also said: "When Israel is involved in great warfare, lift up your heads and rejoice," for "your redemption draweth nigh."[645]

A good overview of some of these extreme, but very influential, opinions was published by *The Jerusalem Post*—here is a summary.

Many Jewish rabbis have addressed this issue since October 7. Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon, a prominent Jewish educator and scholar known for his work on Jewish law and eschatology, has offered a detailed reading of the recent conflict through the framework of the Gog and Magog prophecy. Rimon noted the significance of the escalation occurring during the Jewish holidays, especially Sukkot. He

observed that, according to tradition, the War of Gog and Magog is expected to begin around this period. He also pointed to the symbolic meaning of the holiday Torah readings, which he said further strengthen the link between current events and the prophecy.

Rabbi Eliyahu Amar, a prominent lecturer on Jewish eschatology and end-time prophecy, expanded on the nature of the War of Gog and Magog, portraying it as a worldwide conflict with deep spiritual significance. "This will be a process towards the coming of the Messiah, where God will come and reveal His kingdom over Israel."

Rabbi Pinchas Winston, a prolific author and speaker on Jewish end-time prophecy and the coming of the Messiah, emphasized the unprecedented nature of the recent Hamas attack, suggesting it may point to the Gog and Magog prophecy. He noted, "The world is polarized like never before on every issue, divided essentially between the forces of good and the forces of evil. That is what the War of Gog and Magog is supposed to do; have people self-identify whether they are for God or against God."

Many Christian evangelicals also have similar views. Previously mentioned John Hagee, known for his strong support of Israel, has often linked Middle Eastern conflicts to the prophecy of Gog and Magog. He recently said that the current conflict in Gaza might be part of God's plan as foretold in the Bible. Hagee stated, "For many 'Christian Zionists,' their support for Israel is rooted in its role in the supposed end times: Jesus' return to Earth, a bloody final battle at Armageddon, and Jesus ruling the world from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem."

Joel Rosenberg, editor-in-chief of *All Israel News* and an end-times author known for his analyses of Middle Eastern politics and biblical prophecies, believes that we might be in the early stages of the Gog and Magog war.

Laurie Cardoza-Moore, founder of Proclaiming Justice to the Nations, a Christian organization advocating for Israel, echoed these views, suggesting that the events could be part of the broader prophetic event described in the Book of Ezekiel.

The debate over whether the conflict in Israel is the War of Gog and Magog reflects a blend of religious interpretation and contemporary analysis. For many Jewish and Christian leaders, these events resonate with ancient prophecies, closes *The Jerusalem Post* article.[646]

Rabbi Jack Abramowitz, a writer, editor, and educator, is not so sure, carefully investigating the details. Let me summarize his article published in *Jew in the City*:

The part about attacking innocent people in undefended cities is true, so that's a mark in favor of this hypothesis. But what additional evidence exists?

The prophecy of Gog and Magog lists several of Magog's partners. One of these is Persia, known today as Iran. It's not a secret that Iran financed Hamas, so this also points toward the possibility that this might be the War of Gog and Magog.

But other allies of Magog mentioned include Kush and Togarmah. Kush is Ethiopia and they have no stake in this conflict. The Radak (Rabbi David Kimhi) identified Togarmah with Germany, but in this confrontation they have aligned themselves with Israel.

Let's examine the timing of the war. The Tur (OC 490) cites a tradition in the name of Rav Hai Gaon (Hai ben Sherira), stating that the War of Gog and Magog will begin in the month of *Tishrei*, which this war undeniably did.

However, from context it appears that the war is supposed to commence on the holiday of Sukkot. The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman) seemed to say that the War of Gog and Magog will start on *Hoshana Rabbah*, the final day of Sukkot. One might call this hair-splitting, but the current hostilities began on *Shemini Atzeret*, which is the day after the last day of Sukkot.

Let's take things one step further. The Malbim (Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel) stated that the timing of the War of Gog and Magog was never disclosed to any prophet; it is a "sealed" matter. If one follows the Malbim's view, the last few paragraphs become irrelevant.

There is a Magog listed among the grandsons of Noah, from whom the nations of the world descend. Should we

assume that the Magog of Ezekiel refers to the same people? Rabbi Jack is not sure. The Abarbanel (Don Isaac Abarbanel) says that the descendants of the Magog in Genesis were dispersed to Italy, France, and Spain. Those countries are not participants in this conflict, so that offers little assistance.

There is also the issue of Mashiach ben Yosef, a sort of "proto-messiah" who is foretold to be a great leader but who will fall in battle with Gog and Magog. This will trigger great mourning, as described in Zechariah chapter 12 (Succah 52a); this has not taken place yet.

Throughout history there have been major events. Some are monumental and some are horrific. A natural human impulse is to try to map them onto Biblical prophecies. This is nearly impossible to do while events are still unfolding; you can't see the picture when you're standing inside the frame. Many Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled in recent decades; they're easier to identify when you can see the entire panorama rather than just one corner. So is this Gog and Magog? "I, personally, don't think so," says Rabbi Jack, "but I guess we'll see!"

There are two messianic pathways—the "easy way" and the "hard way." The redemption will arrive eventually, and when it does, we'll receive the scenario we have earned. But if we conduct ourselves well, we may not need a Mashiach ben Yosef or a War of Gog and Magog at all.[647]

A comment by a user under Rabbi Jack's article disagrees and points to an article: "It is very clear that we see in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he is fulfilling his destiny as Moshiach ben Yosef, that is to say, the reincarnation of Jonathan," according to Rabbi Levi Sudri. "The name 'Netanyahu' (*נתניהו*) is composed of the same letters as the name 'Jonathan' (*יהונתן*)."[648]

According to Project Syndicate, a secular liberal/center-left media organization, the "Zionist apocalyptic fantasy" has three steps: gain dominion over the land, build the Third Temple in Jerusalem, and replace democracy with the Kingdom of the House of David, appointed by God to rule Israel.

But bringing about the coming of the messiah will require more than judicial reform or settlement expansion. It will involve "messianic pangs"—in the form of upheaval, suffering, and distress—and an apocalyptic confrontation: the long-foretold War of Gog and Magog, in which a coalition of adversaries attempts to wipe out Israel, only for the messiah to emerge. According to some zealots, Hamas's October 7 attack, which set off the current war in Gaza, marked the opening phase of this war.

This line of thought reflects a political theology developed in seminaries in the occupied Palestinian territories by rabbis who regarded Israel's "miraculous" triumph in the Six-Day War of 1967 as a "messianic moment." Indeed, the founders of religious Zionism—Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook—welcomed the prospect of conflict. "When there is a great war in the world," the father wrote, "the power of the Messiah awakens." The son echoed him: "Every war is a phase in the Redemption of Israel."

Messianic Jews have counterparts in the United States. American evangelicals also view the war in Gaza as a catalyst for the realization of their divine plan, and instead of fearing the apocalypse, they long for it no less than the Kooks.

After the Iranian missile attack on Israel in April 2024, pastor Hagee proclaimed, "Prophetically, we are on the verge of the Gog-Magog war that Ezekiel described in chapters 38 and 39." In his interpretation, it is Jesus Christ's "second coming" that follows the near-destruction of the Jews, with faithful Christians and converts—not the Jews themselves—inheriting God's kingdom on Earth. This explains why Hagee and his Christians United for Israel—the same organization that pushed former US President Donald Trump to move the US embassy to Jerusalem—urged US lawmakers not to impede the war's escalation. Evangelical leaders throughout the US have pressed their allies in the Republican Party to expand aid and weapons shipments to Israel.[649]

Plans for Building the Third Temple

The Temple Mount, or Mt. Moriah in the Bible, and which Muslims call Haram al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary, is a focal point. The temple itself is called *Bayt al-Maqdis* in Arabic, which corresponds to the Hebrew *Beit HaMikdash*, meaning "Holy House" in both languages. It was here that King Solomon built the First Temple, nearly a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. After it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, the Second Temple was built and was later expanded by King Herod into one of the greatest monuments of the ancient world. The Romans destroyed it during their sacking of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque were built in the late 7th and early 8th centuries on this site. Today, the Western Wall (also Wailing Wall or Kotel) remains as a retaining wall of the Second Temple and is Judaism's holiest accessible site for prayer.

Under the current status quo arrangement, Muslims are allowed to pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, while Jews and other non-Muslims may visit but are not permitted to pray there. Most mainstream rabbinical authorities actually prohibit Jews from entering the compound itself, based on concerns about ritual impurity and the exact location of the Holy of Holies—the innermost and most sacred area of the ancient temple—which could risk desecration. But not everyone accepts the status quo or the prohibition, and some religious Zionist groups are determined to rebuild the Third Temple.

While traditional Jews hold that the Third Temple can only be built in the foretold messianic era, groups such as **The Temple Institute** argue that Jews must actively advance the prophecy themselves. In their view, the long-awaited age can only arrive after the Temple has been constructed and ritually purified — a task they believe falls to them.

The Institute operates an active YouTube channel, where it publishes "Temple Talk" podcast episodes, Torah lessons, and videos describing its work to prepare for a Third

Temple, including the reconstruction of dozens of temple vessels. It has also produced a large gold menorah built according to Torah specifications, weighing roughly half a ton and containing 45 kilograms of 24-karat gold. The menorah now stands in the main plaza of the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem's Old City, described in the Institute's video as "ready to be kindled in the rebuilt Holy Temple."

Boneh Israel, another group advocating for the construction of a Third Temple, includes both Jewish and Christian members who, according to its website, work on "actively bringing the redemption closer." The group was responsible for transporting several red heifers from Texas to Israel in early 2023.

Rabbi Yitzchak Mamo, affiliated with another Third Temple group, **Uvne Jerusalem**, revealed that he had planned a Passover 2024 ceremony to slaughter the imported heifers, provided they had not developed any blemishes. Mamo also said he purchased a plot of land overlooking the Temple Mount twelve years earlier, specifically with the intention of using it for the ceremony and initiating preparations for the construction of the Third Temple.

Although visiting the Temple Mount is restricted according to most rabbis, some Jewish groups have, especially in recent years, been allowed to pray on the Temple Mount. One group, **Shalom Jerusalem**, led by Yehuda Glick, has made promoting and establishing Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount its mission and, though the rules have officially remained unchanged, Israeli soldiers have protected Glick and other Jewish worshipers on the hilltop.[650]

There is another group, **High on the Har**, which leads tours on the Temple Mount. "It's so important for the Jews to return and rebuild the temple," said New York native Melissa Jane Kronfeld, who founded the organization.

"I believe it's going to go, 100%. The whole thing is going to go to build a temple," she said, insisting that the shrine and its golden dome should be preserved but relocated.[651]

But other voices explicitly call for the destruction of the Muslim holy sites. After Iran responded to the Israeli strike on Iran's consulate in Damascus in April 2024, launching a

barrage of drones and missiles at Israeli military targets, controversial **Rabbi Yosef Mizrachi** saw an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. He called on Israeli officials to target the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound with a missile and lay the blame on Iran, to "clear the place for the Third Temple" while turning all the Arabs against Iran, to "make them fight with each other."[652]

After such preparations and statements, no wonder Muslims are convinced that the Zionists want to destroy the Muslim sites on the Temple Mount, despite official denials. One elusive way, they claim, is to use archaeology as cover. Israel has undertaken so-called **archaeological excavations** underground around the Temple Mount. Palestinian officials, Muslim authorities, and several heritage-monitoring organizations have raised serious concerns, claiming that these excavations are deliberately weakening the structural foundations of both the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. In February 2023, cracks and other forms of damage were reported, but the Islamic Religious Endowments Department was blocked by Israel from carrying out urgent restoration work.[653]

These extreme messianic figures calling for the building of the Third Temple enjoy support from the highest political levels—not only in Israel, but also in the US. In 2024, at a National Gathering for Prayer and Repentance held in Washington, D.C., Yitzchak Mamo of Uvne Jerusalem spoke of his hopes for a Third Jewish Temple. The gathering was convened by US House Speaker **Mike Johnson**, who gave a keynote prayer before a who's-who of evangelical leaders and congresspeople spoke.[654]

As another example, on his visit to Israel in 2025, US Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** took part in the inauguration of a tunnel under the Temple Mount.[655] He and his wife can be seen in a photo op with Benjamin and Sarah Netanyahu demonstratively digging the tunnel with hammers,[656] while not visiting (or not publicizing a visit to) the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, one of the holiest sites in Christianity built on the traditional site of Jesus's crucifixion and burial, only a few hundred meters away.

Breeding the Red Heifers with American Christian Help

> The Zionists, who said that we cannot wait for G-d to establish a state and take the Jews to the Holy Land, established a state and now they say that we cannot expect G-d to send a red heifer, we will create this heifer and sacrifice it.[657]

According to Voice of Rabbis, reflecting the classic Satmar theological line, Zionist Jews rebel against God with acts like breeding the red heifer, as quoted above. In this rebellious act, they have the support of misguided American Christian cattle breeders. This is not the first time that non-Jews have helped provide the sacrificial animal to the Jewish people.

The Talmud (Kiddushin 31a) relates that a non-Jew named Dama ben Netina refused to provide gems needed for the Temple, despite the offer of a large reward, because his father was sleeping on the key to the box holding the gems and he did not want to disturb his father's rest. In reward for the respect he showed for his father, a red heifer was born into ben Netina's herd the next year, and he was able to sell the Temple the heifer for the money he would have earned if he had sold them the gems.[658]

The latest red heifer, announced by The Temple Institute in September 2023, also originated from gentiles, and this cooperation to find the perfect calf goes back decades. The Temple Institute first imported red cows from Nebraska, USA, in the 1990s, where Evangelical Christian farmers support these Jewish goals. *The New Yorker* published an article in 1998, titled "Forcing the End," that tells the story of Clyde Lott, a Pentecostal preacher. In the spring of 1989, he came to the opinion that the Second Coming and the fate of humankind now depended on his efforts.

A qualified red heifer has not been identified in Israel for nearly two thousand years. In the United States, however, red cattle are far from rare. One breed, known as Red Angus, is

as red as an Irish setter. Lott later said it occurred to him that God—whom he believed had guided his earlier success in the show ring—was now directing him toward a far greater purpose.

After visiting Israel, Lott concluded that the country's ranching industry was in poor condition and lagging behind. He came to believe that with modern breeding methods and top-quality Red Angus cattle, it would be possible to produce not just a single red heifer, but an entire herd

In 1997, Lott, Rabbi Chaim Richman, the International Director of The Temple Institute at the time, and a group of West Bank settlers agreed to provide land for raising red cattle. Lott and Richman entered into a partnership, with the understanding that if Lott were raptured with the Church, Richman and the settlers would take full control of the project. Later that year, they planned to ship five hundred pregnant cows to the Jordan Valley. The cattle were being bred in Nebraska on a three-thousand-acre ranch dedicated to Red Angus.

Lott also planned to ship frozen embryos from Dixie, the first potential red heifer he found, and other donor cows, along with select sperm, to be held in safekeeping until after the tribulation. According to Lott, his efforts would ensure that "in the first one or two or three decades of the millennial reign Israel will be able to go into the tanks, pull out those frozen embryos, and place them in cows. And in one generation, whatever they lost in the tribulation, they will have the very best cows on the face of the earth."[659]

The first attempts were not successful, but in 2021, Byron Stinson, a Texas rancher and a Christian activist for the Zionist organization Boneh Israel, found other potential animals on the Triple Creek Ranch in Rockwall, Texas, raised by farmer Ty Davenport. Five perfectly red heifers were shipped to Israel in 2022, declared as "pets" to bypass strict laws in place at the time that banned the import of US live animals to Israel.[660]

The heifers were greeted by a ceremony at Ben-Gurion Airport. Alongside Temple Institute officials, Netanel Isaac, the Director General of the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs and

Heritage, attended and delivered a speech at the gathering to welcome the cows' arrival. There, Isaac disclosed that the ministry has been funding development of the Mount of Olives area where the temple movements intend to hold the "red heifer ceremony."

According to the Israeli non-profit organization Ir Amim, the ministry has been promoting a plan for the establishment of a promenade on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple Mount. This promenade is slated to lead to the precise area where the temple movements intend to hold the red heifer sacrifice. Yitzchak Mamo, one of the leading figures involved in bringing the cows to Israel, said he also gained control of an olive grove on the Mount of Olives, which will serve as the location for conducting the red heifer ceremony as "the first step towards building the Temple."[661]

After receiving the cattle, they were transported to Haifa where they sat in quarantine for several days, then the cows were transferred to two separate locations. One of the locations was at the Tel Shiloh archaeological site in the occupied West Bank, which was eventually opened to the public in July 2023, as the *Jewish Press* reported.

Upon opening, hundreds of visitors flocked to the Ancient Shiloh heritage site, where the biblical Tabernacle once stood, to see the 22-month-old cow. Two more heifers were planned to be transported to the town, and a center was to open there dedicated to researching the phenomenon. The heifers would be kept in a fenced-off area, and visitors would not be able to touch the animals.

"This is an exciting and exceptional event for the entire Jewish people," said Ancient Shiloh CEO, Coby Mamo, a relative of Yitzchak Mamo. "We are already in touch with researchers and promoters around the world who are waiting to come here with large groups. We have returned to the site of the Tabernacle in Shiloh and are bringing back the Jewish past for the future of our people."

Israel Ganz, head of the local council, called the cow's arrival a "historic moment."

"The Ancient Shiloh site is continuing to grow and develop, and the Red Heifer Center will attract more visitors,

up to one million a year, from Israel and around the world," he added, calling it "good news for the Jewish world, for scientists and researchers, and for everyone."[662]

Then, in January 2024, in a video posted on Boneh Israel's website, Michael Samuel Smith, a Christian preacher working with the Jewish organization, said the red heifers they have been raising in Shiloh have come of sacrificial age.

"This is the first time in nearly 2,000 years a successful red heifer has come about," Smith said in the video. "It is still our opinion the first successful red heifer sacrifice will take place in the spring of 2024 around the Passover to Pentecost timeframe."

"We believe God is going to reveal himself through the efforts of this future event. It is truly a sign of the times, most especially for Jews in Israel."[663]

Everything seemed to be on track, the red heifer, priests, and necessary accessories all ready, and the temple movement activists were planning the sacrifice, but the sacrificial animals needed a final check.

A Few Black Hairs — End Times Postponed

The latest news, in July 2025, was that the potential perfect red heifer was not pure: it was disqualified from being a valid sacrificial offering because it had two black hairs. Despite the disqualification, a practice ceremony was performed using this heifer, which served as a rehearsal for qualified priests to practice the ritual for a future, valid sacrifice. The rehearsal involved slaughtering the disqualified heifer and burning it in the fire, along with the required ritual garments and other elements. This rehearsal was a step in the larger effort to perform the ritual at the real occasion, before the Temple constructions begin. According to Evangelical activist and Texas rancher Byron Stinson, who took part in the organization of the event, it was actually a "valid" red heifer ritual, the first in 2,000 years. However, higher rabbinic authorities would have to validate that claim, and The Temple Institute itself did not make this claim.

To perform the ceremony, a Levitically pure priest is required—one who has been purified using the ashes of the previous red heifer. The only way to bypass this requirement would be to raise a priest from infancy with the sole purpose of preserving ritual purity, taking strict measures such as never entering a building containing a dead body, never visiting a cemetery, and never entering a hospital where corpses might be present. The Temple Institute claims it has done exactly that, announcing that it has successfully identified and enlisted eligible kohanim—an unusual convergence of conditions needed to carry out the ritual.

"Recently, a groundbreaking test run was taken using a disqualified heifer," The Temple Institute wrote on Facebook. "The experience better prepares us for the ultimate performance of the ceremony with a kosher heifer."

Stinson, however, wrote on Facebook: "I just think the world needs to know. The ceremony went perfect. With a perfect priest. In a place outside of the camp. And, in the opinion of those I respect, we used a perfect red heifer."

This opinion is shared by Adam King, a Jewish social media podcast personality, who made the announcement on *TimCast*, a video podcast program with millions of viewers.

"It was a real offering, they did it all by the laws," King said in a viral clip. "The red heifer people, they fooled everybody and successfully performed the ritual."

He then revealed plastic bags containing what he said were the ashes of the red heifer and the hyssop used in the ceremony. He also claimed that the solution of ash and water created by the priest is already performing miracles, such as restoring sight to the blind, in healing ceremonies.

Those who conducted the ceremony do not deny that the heifer was disqualified. But even if The Temple Institute were to claim that the ceremony was valid, higher rabbinic authorities could declare the results invalid for political reasons.

But Judaism is known for its wide range of opinions, and by some interpretations, this may be sufficient. Must there be full agreement? Stinson said he leaves that decision in the hands of God.[664]

You can watch a report with Byron Stinson on KENS 5 channel,[665] and a short video of the sacrifice on *Israel National News*.[666]

For now, the End Times is postponed, but the breeding and the search for the perfect red heifer continue. And since the temple activists have even practiced the ceremony, they are readier than ever before.

The Samson Option — If Everything Fails

We have seen the plans to build the Third Temple, create Greater Israel, destroy Iran, and establish hegemony over the region—but what if it all fails? Without any exaggeration, we have to be worried: there are nuclear weapons in the hands of messianic fanatics. If they feel their dream is slipping away, we can expect anything from them; Israelis, even if secular, are prepared to take the whole world down with them. Officially it may be denied, but the existence of the "Samson Option" is just as much an open secret as the possession of nuclear weapons—and it threatens the whole world.

The Samson Option is a term used to describe a theoretical Israeli military strategy that involves launching a massive retaliatory nuclear strike in the event that the State of Israel faces an existential threat. Targets are focused not only on hostile states but on other "friendly" countries as well, even in Europe. The deterrence doctrine is named after the biblical figure Samson, who brought down a Philistine temple, killing himself along with his enemies ("Let me die with the Philistines"—Judg. 16:30). The term implies mutual destruction.

The term was popularized by investigative journalist **Seymour Hersh** in his 1991 book *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*.[667] Hersh argues that Israel's strategic doctrine includes the possibility of massive nuclear retaliation if the state's survival is at stake. The book traces how Israel built a covert nuclear weapons program

around the **Dimona** facility in the Negev Desert, beginning in the late 1950s with French assistance. Dimona became the heart of a deliberately secretive system of plutonium production and warhead development, guarded by layers of diplomatic ambiguity and denial.

Hersh describes years of tension and negotiation between the United States and Israel over this program. American intelligence agencies tried to assess Israel's nuclear progress, while Israeli officials insisted on strict secrecy. Eventually, the relationship settled into what he calls "nuclear ambiguity": Washington agreed not to publicly acknowledge Israel's arsenal, and Israel agreed not to test or openly declare one.

The book also examines the "Vanunu Affair," in which **Mordechai Vanunu**, a technician at Dimona, leaked photographs of the facility to the British press in 1986. He was later abducted by Mossad in Rome and brought to Israel, where he was imprisoned for revealing state secrets. Hersh pairs this with the Pollard case: **Jonathan Pollard**, a US Navy intelligence analyst who spied for Israel in the mid-1980s. His arrest and life sentence strained US-Israeli relations and exposed the depth of Israel's intelligence priorities concerning its security and weapons program. After three decades in prison, Pollard was paroled in 2015 and later moved to Israel, where he was welcomed by government officials and nationalist groups as a hero. (A 2014 book claims that Israel tapped White House phones and that Netanyahu offered Bill Clinton the Monica Lewinsky tapes in exchange for Pollard.[668])

Finally, Hersh points to reports of a nuclear alert during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Israeli leadership, facing early battlefield losses, allegedly prepared a small number of nuclear weapons as a signal of desperation. According to Hersh, this move helped push the United States to speed up emergency resupply, illustrating Israel's willingness to let the world face its nuclear capability if necessary.

The Samson Option, as Hersh frames it, is less a declared doctrine than a strategic shadow. It is the idea that if Israel is ever on the brink of destruction, it may be prepared to bring catastrophic force to bear rather than fall.

Some issued **explicit threats** invoking the Samson Option, even if they did not name it outright. David D. Perlmutter, an associate professor of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University and a senior fellow at the Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* a quite biased article in 2002. He explained his apocalyptic vision of nuclear revenge on the whole world if Israel was let down. "For the first time in history, a people facing extermination while the world either cackles or looks away have the power to destroy the world," he wrote, then asked: "The ultimate justice?"

> The Jews understand what passive and powerless acceptance of doom has meant for them in the past, and they have ensured against it. Masada was not an example to follow--it hurt the Romans not a whit, but Sampson in Gaza? With an H-bomb? What would serve the Jew-hating world better in repayment for thousands of years of massacres but a Nuclear Winter. Or invite all those tut-tutting European statesmen and peace activists to join us in the ovens?[669]

Crazy thoughts of a bitter man who hates the world, one could say, but it seems this is what many in Israel think and are prepared for, even inside the military establishment.

Nuclear **warheads** are **pointed at European capitals**, according to Martin van Creveld, professor of military history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who has advised defense institutions including the IDF. And Israel is ready to take down the whole world with it if the world won't permit them to ethnically cleanse Palestine, he was quoted in a 2003 *The Guardian* article.

Israel is not secure, it can be threatened in its very existence, van Creveld argued. Such a threat could grow out of Palestinian resistance, because the Israeli forces lose if they don't win, and the rebels win if they don't lose. A total Israeli defeat is unavoidable, the professor explained, unless the "transfer" of the Palestinians is carried out. More and

more Israelis were coming to regard transfer as the "only salvation," and resort to it was growing "more probable" with each passing day.

> But would the world permit such ethnic cleansing? 'That depends on who does it and how quickly it happens. We possess several hundred atomic warheads and rockets and can launch them at targets in all directions, perhaps even at Rome. Most European capitals are targets for our air force. Let me quote General Moshe Dayan: "Israel must be like a mad dog, too dangerous to bother." I consider it all hopeless at this point. We shall have to try to prevent things from coming to that, if at all possible. Our armed forces, however, are not the thirtieth strongest in the world, but rather the second or third. We have the capability to take the world down with us. And I can assure you that that will happen before Israel goes under.'[670]

It's not an official policy of Israel and van Creveld was speaking on his own behalf, but nevertheless, these are very chilling words from someone who clearly understands the Israeli psyche and what high-ranking officers and politicians discuss behind closed doors.

Alternatives to Armageddon

The world is on a path toward catastrophe, in one form or another. The likelihood of a major global conflict, potentially involving nuclear weapons, is alarmingly high. Even if humanity avoids nuclear war and the global order stabilizes one way or another, international law and long-standing norms no longer matter, and the Western democracies we once believed in are being transformed into oppressive, dystopian regimes—there is not even a pretense of upholding our fundamental values anymore. At the heart of all this is the Middle East. As long as Israeli oppression in Palestine continues, and as long as Israel suppresses criticism and interferes in politics across the West, there will be resistance. You cannot rule the world by force—or if you can, God forbid, it would be the end of meaningful human existence. It may seem at the moment that the oppressive forces are winning and change is unimaginable. But change can happen. Living in the Soviet Bloc, people could not imagine that the Communist system would ever end; then, in the span of just a few years, it all fell apart. Similarly, it seemed unthinkable at the time that the apartheid system in South Africa would collapse—yet it did.

We can learn from both events, but the similarities with South Africa are more relevant. It was also a **settler colony**, built on segregation, systematic discrimination, and the maintenance of a large non-voting population confined to fragmented Bantustans, governed through military force and brutal repression. The USA, Canada, and Australia, among other Western nations, are other former settler colonies that committed what some label as genocide.[671] Israel today is

going through similar dynamics witnessed in these places that eventually became nation-states. The Indigenous peoples in these countries fought hard for **self-determination** and eventually secured rights, even though they had already suffered violence, dispossession, and long-term cultural repression by that point. While formally free, they often remain disadvantaged in their own homelands, although their culture is reviving and their rights are improving in many instances. Good or not, this is one of the scenarios toward which developments in occupied Palestine may move.

The two-state solution was never a viable option—since Israel always sabotaged it one way or another—and you can declare it now dead. Israel is determined to create one single country on all of historic Mandatory Palestine. The vision Smotrich described, as we saw earlier, is that Palestinians should be "encouraged" to leave, and those who remain can live there in their enclaves but without voting rights—those who resist will be eliminated. But such an openly fascist colonial state cannot exist for long, some believe.

The Zionist project—Israel in its current apartheid form—will collapse in the foreseeable future, according to historian Ilan Pappé, who thinks the "Neo-Zionist State" of Israel has entered a **late-stage settler-colonial crisis** marked by deep internal fragmentation, escalating extremism, economic and demographic unsustainability, and growing international isolation which will lead to disintegration. Ultimately, Pappé argues, Israeli Jews will face the same stark choice as white South Africans did: share power under equal rights or depart. Decolonization is historically messy, often violent, but in the end, he believes, a secular, democratic state across historic Palestine could emerge: one person, one vote; constitutional equality; and the right of return.[672]

One of the most important factors in this equation is US support. If it was lost, Israel couldn't sustain its aggressive policies; it would have to make peace with its neighbors from a very different power position. A weakened US economy and waning political support could eventually lead to less assistance for Israel. Perhaps a new multipolar world order could bring the balance the world needs.

For a post-apartheid Israel, **South Africa** offers positive examples of how to move forward and how to heal wounds. Their "**Truth and Reconciliation Councils**" let those who committed crimes come forward and honestly confess in front of the victims' families; if the offender showed remorse, he was forgiven and didn't receive a punishment.[673] All religions value forgiveness, and these African families demonstrated just how strong their faith truly is. Perhaps it sounds too optimistic, but reconciliation in the Middle East cannot be ruled out one day either.

Instead of a self-proclaimed "Jewish State," it would be a land for Jews and Arabs, and others who have lived there for centuries, perhaps called **Israel-Palestine**, just as New Zealand is called Aotearoa by the Indigenous Māori people. **New Zealand-Aotearoa** could be a positive example with its large Indigenous population that managed to hold on to its identity and gained recognition and political influence, despite recent setbacks in 2024.[674] Israel-Palestine poses unique challenges, but the Māori struggle provides valuable lessons, such as the Waitangi Tribunal, which recognizes Indigenous grievances and recommends reparations and return of land.[675]

The idea of a "one-state-solution" is not new, writes political economist Keith Rankin. Jewish and Non-Jewish intellectuals on the political left have been arguing for it for over 100 years. It's just that their voices have always been deamplified by those on the political center and right.

Hans Kohn (1891-1971) was a Prague-born Jewish intellectual best known as an early, influential theorist of nationalism. In the 1920s-30s, after living in Mandatory Palestine, he became associated with Brit Shalom, a circle of Zionist intellectuals who argued for Jewish-Arab coexistence in a binational political framework rather than an exclusive Jewish nation-state.

Yanis Varoufakis also argues against separation and for arrangements that would ensure full political rights and reject ethno-exclusivity; his writings commonly talk about "one democratic state," though he sometimes discusses federal or confederal structures rather than a unitary state.[676]

Israeli historian **Shlomo Sand** outlines the history of the arguments for a single "binational" state in his 2024 book *Israel-Palestine: Federation or Apartheid?* His vision emphasizes "binationalism," and looks at successful liberal examples of bi- or multi-nationalism: Canada, Belgium, Switzerland.[677]

The better framing of this approach, Rankin believes, is "biculturalism." What would work best for Israel-Palestine is the same model that works in New Zealand-Aotearoa: **multiculturalism with a bicultural** (treaty) **emphasis**. The ideal is for Israel-Palestine to become a liberal democracy in which all people born within its borders become citizens with equal citizenship rights; a nation state which commits to both the domestic and international norms of liberal democracy.

Recognition of Israel-Palestine as a sovereign nation state, under any name, should come with overt expectations of democracy, amnesty, truth, reconciliation, and press freedom. There should be no formal or informal mechanism of "settling scores," no matter how reprehensible anyone's past behavior has been. Truth trumps vengeance cloaked as "accountability."

The aim, Rankin concludes, should be a **multi-cultural Levantine sovereign state**, embracing adherents of the three Abrahamic faiths (as well as people of other religions, or no religion) as citizens: Levantine Jews, Levantine Muslims, Levantine Christians, and others. All Israelis. And all Palestinians.[678]

Alternative models and positive examples do exist, as we saw—they are simply ignored. So it is up to every person who values peace, freedom, and justice to do whatever they can, within their means, to bring about change before power-hungry elites and religious fanatics turn the world into a dystopian hellscape or even trigger Armageddon.

Glossary

Abarbanel – medieval Jewish biblical commentator, philosopher, and statesman (15th century)
ADL – Anti-Defamation League, US-based organization that describes its mission as combating antisemitism
aggadic – relating to non-legal rabbinic teachings, narratives, and ethical reflections (aggadah)
aharit ha-yamim – "end of days"; the Jewish eschatological future
AIPAC – American Israel Public Affairs Committee, US-based pro-Israel lobbying organization
Al-Aqsa Mosque – major Islamic holy site in Jerusalem, located on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount compound
Am Segulah – "the chosen people"; a theological concept expressing Israel's covenantal responsibility to follow divine law, not superiority
Am Yisrael – "the people of Israel"; a broad term denoting Jewish collective identity and peoplehood
Amalek – archetypal biblical enemy of Israel, often used as a symbol of absolute or irredeemable evil
Amalekites – people descended from Amalek in the Hebrew Bible
APC – Armoured Personnel Carrier
Armageddon – apocalyptic final battle in Christian eschatology
atchalta de'geulah – "beginning of redemption"; a messianic phase in some strands of Jewish thought
Avraham – Abraham, biblical patriarch of Israel
Avram – Abraham's original name in the Book of Genesis

Bantustans – fragmented, nominally autonomous territories under South African apartheid
Beit HaMikdash – "the Holy Temple"; the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, central to biblical worship and Jewish eschatology.
BDS – Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement targeting Israel

Betar – Revisionist Zionist youth movement founded in 1923 and still active today; flagged as an extremist group
BIS – Bank for International Settlements; an international financial institution often described as the "central bank of central banks"
B'nai Yisrael – "the children of Israel"; biblical term for the Jewish people
B'nei Yisroel – Ashkenazi variant of B'nai Yisrael
brit – "covenant"; the binding relationship between God and Israel
Brit Shalom – a defunct Zionist movement (1925-1933) that sought a binational state in Palestine with equal rights for Arabs and Jews, emphasizing peaceful coexistence and cooperation

Chevlei ha-Mashiach – "birth pangs of the Messiah"; end-times suffering
Chillul Hashem – "desecration of God's name"; actions that bring moral or ethical disgrace upon Judaism
CUFI – Christians United for Israel, US-based Christian Zionist organization
CBDC – central bank digital currency; issued and backed by its central bank, distinct from cryptocurrencies

Daesh – Arabic acronym for ISIS, often used pejoratively
Dajjal – deceiving false messiah in Islamic eschatology
Dati – Israeli term for the non-Haredi Orthodox religious sector
Dati Leumi – "National Religious"; Orthodox Zionist movement combining religious observance with Jewish nationalism
Dehikat HaKetz – "forcing the end"; rabbinic concept prohibiting attempts to hasten redemption through human action
DHS – US Department of Homeland Security
DoD – US Department of Defense
DOJ – US Department of Justice
Druze – Levantine ethno-religious community that emerged from Ismaili Shia Islam in the 11th century but developed distinct religious beliefs separate from mainstream Islam

ECHR – European Convention on Human Rights
Eretz Israel – "Land of Israel"; a religious–historical concept referring to the biblically promised land, predating and distinct from any modern political or state definition
Etzel – Hebrew acronym for Irgun
Eyal – Jewish Fighting Organization, a short-lived extremist group that emerged in Israel in the mid-1990s

FTO – Foreign Terrorist Organization (US legal designation)

Galut – exile; the Jewish condition of dispersion outside the Land of Israel
Gemara – rabbinic commentary on the Mishnah (earliest written compilation of Jewish oral law); together with it forms the Talmud
GCHQ – UK Government Communications Headquarters (signals intelligence agency)
GDP – Gross Domestic Product, measure of economic output
GDP (PPP) – GDP adjusted for purchasing power parity
ger toshav – resident non-Jew in rabbinic law who accepts the seven Noahide laws and is granted protected status
ge'ulah – redemption or divine deliverance in Judaism
goy she'kibel alav sheva mitzvot – non-resident non-Jew who accepts the seven Noahide laws
goy/goyim – non-Jew/non-Jews; a Hebrew/Yiddish term that can be used neutrally or, in some contexts, derogatorily

habeas corpus – legal principle protecting against unlawful detention
Haganah – Jewish paramilitary organization in Mandate Palestine
halakha – Jewish religious law
halakhic – relating to Jewish law
Har HaBayit – "the Temple Mount"; site of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem
Har Megiddo – Mount of Megiddo; associated with Armageddon
Haram al-Sharif – "Noble Sanctuary"; Islamic name for the Temple Mount
Haredi – ultra-Orthodox Jewish community; includes both Hasidic and non-Hasidic groups
hasbara – "explanation"; Israeli public diplomacy; organized advocacy defending state policies
Hashem – "The Name"; reverent Jewish term for God
Hasidic – relating to Hasidism, a mystical Jewish movement originating in 18th-century Eastern Europe (e.g., Satmar, Chabad)
herem – ban, excommunication, or sacred prohibition
hesder – program combining yeshiva study with military service
Hilonim – secular Jews in Israeli sociological classification
HRW – Human Rights Watch, international NGO
HTS – Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, Syrian jihadist group, al-Qaeda offshot

IAF – Israeli Air Force
ICC – International Criminal Court
ICE – US Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL – International Humanitarian Law
IHRA – International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
Irgun – Zionist paramilitary group in Mandate Palestine, designated as a terrorist organization by the British authorities; also known as Etzel (an acronym of Irgun Tsvai Leumi).
Isa – Jesus in Islamic tradition
ISI – Inter-Services Intelligence agency in Pakistan
ISIL – Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, alternative name for ISIS
ISIS – Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
Israel – the name given to Jacob, commonly interpreted as "one who wrestles with God"; later extended to his descendants (the Israelites), without an original political or state meaning
Israelites – the ancient people of the Land of Israel in the Hebrew Bible, descended from Jacob (Israel)
Israfil – angel in Islam who blows the trumpet at the Last Judgment

Jahannam – Islamic term for hell
Jannah – Islamic term for paradise
Judea – ancient region of the central highlands of the historic Land of Israel, located largely in today's West Bank; used in ideological or political reference to "Greater Israel"

Kabbalah – Jewish mystical tradition concerned with divine structure, cosmology, and spiritual meaning
Kach – extremist Jewish movement founded by Meir Kahane; banned in Israel and designated a terrorist organization by Israel and the United States
kashrut – Jewish dietary laws governing permitted and forbidden foods
keffiyeh – traditional Middle Eastern scarf, symbolically Palestinian
Kibbutz Galuyot – "ingathering of the exiles"; eschatological return of Jews to the Land of Israel
kippah seruga – "knitted skullcap"; commonly associated with the Religious Zionist (Dati Leumi) community
Klal Yisrael – "the whole of Israel"; concept emphasizing unity and collective responsibility of the Jewish people
Knesset – Israel's parliament

kohan/kohanim – Jewish priest/priests or priestly class
Kotel – the Western Wall in Jerusalem

Litvish – non-Hasidic Haredi tradition rooted in Lithuanian yeshiva culture; often associated with rationalist Talmud study
Lehi – Zionist paramilitary organization in Mandate Palestine, designated as a terrorist organization by the British authorities; also known as the Stern Gang

Mahdi – messianic redeemer in Islamic eschatology
Maimonides – Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, known as Rambam in Jewish tradition; medieval Jewish philosopher and legal scholar
Malchut Yisrael – "the Kingdom of Israel"; biblical concept of Jewish sovereignty
MANPADS – man-portable air-defense system
Mashiach – the Messiah, future redeemer in Judaism
Mashiach ben David – the Davidic messiah in Jewish eschatology, expected to bring final redemption
Mashiach ben Yosef – precursor messiah associated with suffering and war
Megiddo – ancient city associated with Armageddon
midrash – rabbinic interpretive literature expanding and explaining biblical texts
mikveh – ritual purification bath in Judaism
Mitnagdim – "opponents"; historical movement opposing the rise of Hasidism in Eastern Europe
mitzvah – commandment in the Torah; commonly used for any good deed or act of kindness
mitzvot – plural of mitzvah
Mizrahi – Jews originating from the Middle East and North Africa; cultural–ethnic designation (Not to be confused with the Mizrachi political-religious movement)
Mizrachi – Religious Zionist movement founded in the early 20th century; acronym for Merkaz Ruhani ("spiritual center")
MK – Member of Knesset
Moshiach – alternate transliteration of Mashiach
mujahideen – Islamist fighters engaged in jihad
mumarim le-hakhiss – Jews who deliberately reject or oppose Jewish law out of defiance

Nakba – "Catastrophe"; the 1948 war and mass displacement of Palestinians; ca. 700,000 people were forced to flee their homes
NGO – non-governmental organization

NIS – New Israeli Shekel
Noach – the Hebrew transliteration of Noah, the biblical figure
Noahide – pertaining to the seven universal laws for non-Jews
NSA – US National Security Agency
Nukhba – elite Hamas commando unit

OAS – Organization of American States
OCHA – UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Olam Ha-Ba – "the world to come"; Jewish afterlife/future era
OSI – US Office of Strategic Influence
Otzma Yehudit – "Jewish Power"; Israeli far-right political party led by Itamar Ben-Gvir

PA – Palestinian Authority; interim Palestinian self-governing body led by Mahmoud Abbas, with authority in parts of the West Bank
parah adumah – "red heifer"; sacrificial animal used in biblical purification rituals
Philistine – an ancient people who lived in the region of today's Gaza, depicted in the Hebrew Bible as a recurring enemy of the Israelites; the name Palestine derives from this word (Hebrew: Peleshet, Greek: Palaistinē, Latin: Philistia, and Arabic: Filastin)
Pikuach Nefesh – principle that preservation of human life overrides nearly all other religious commandments
PKK – Kurdistan Workers' Party; Kurdish militant and political organization that fought the Turkish state for decades
PLO – Palestine Liberation Organization; umbrella organization once led by Yasser Arafat, designated a terrorist organization in the past
PNAC – Project for a New American Century, US neoconservative think tank
Purim – Jewish festival commemorating the Book of Esther

Qiyamah – Islamic resurrection; see Yawm al-Qiyamah

Rambam – Hebrew acronym for Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, a medieval Jewish philosopher and legal scholar; Maimonides, the Hellenized/Latinized form of his name, means "son of Maimon"
rebbe – Hasidic spiritual leader, dynastic head of a Hasidic court

Salafi – a follower of Salafism, a puritanical Sunni movement seeking to emulate the pure practices and beliefs of the Prophet Muhammad and his first three generations of followers (salaf)

Samael – angelic figure in Jewish tradition often associated with Satan, accusation, or evil
Samaria – ancient region of the central highlands of the historic Land of Israel, located largely in today's West Bank; used in ideological or political reference to "Greater Israel"
Sanhedrin – the supreme Jewish legal and judicial court in antiquity, whose restoration is associated with the messianic era
SDF – Syrian Democratic Forces; Kurdish-led coalition that fought against Assad
Sephardi – Jews of Iberian (Spanish–Portuguese) origin and their descendants
Shabbat Zachor – Sabbath recalling Amalek before Purim
Shemini Atzeret – Jewish festival following Sukkot
Shia – smaller branch of Islam that holds Ali and his descendants (the Imams) as rightful leaders after Muhammad; predominant in Iran, Azerbaijan, and parts of Iraq
Shivat Yerushalayim – "return to Jerusalem"; theme of restoration and redemption in Jewish thought
Shoah – the Holocaust during World War II
Siddur – Jewish prayer book
Simchat Torah – Jewish festival celebrating completion of Torah reading
Sirat – bridge over Hell in Islamic eschatology
Succah – temporary hut used during Sukkot
Sukkot – harvest festival commemorating the 40 years wandering and living in temporary shelters (succah) after leaving Egypt
Sunni – largest branch of Islam, emphasizing community consensus and tradition; majority in most Muslim countries

takfiri – Islamist who declares other Muslims apostates
tamei met – ritual impurity from contact with the dead in Judaism
Techiyat ha-Metim – the Resurrection of the Dead in Jewish belief, in which the righteous are restored to life
TCO – Terrorist Content Online (regulatory term)
TSDB – Terrorist Screening Database (US watchlist)

USC – United States Code; the codified collection of permanent federal statutes of the United States

Wahhabi – a follower of Wahhabism, a strict and puritanical Sunni movement founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab; the term is used primarily by outsiders; adherents often refer to themselves as salafis

Yaakov – Jacob, biblical patriarch
Yajuj and Majuj – Gog and Magog in Islamic tradition
YAMAM – Israeli police counterterrorism unit
Yawm al-Qiyamah – Day of Resurrection in Islam
yeshiva – Jewish religious academy or seminary
yeshivot – plural of yeshiva
Yetzer Hara – "the evil inclination"; internal human drive toward wrongdoing in Jewish theology
YHWH – four-letter name of God in the Hebrew Bible
Yitzhak – Isaac, biblical patriarch
YPG – People's Protection Units; Kurdish militia in Syria that fought ISIS and clashed with Turkish forces and the Assad regime

Zohar – foundational text of Kabbalah, traditionally attributed to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

Sources

This book draws on more than 600 sources, most of which are publicly available online. Although full URLs are provided here, typing them manually into a browser is not convenient. For that reason, small companion sites were created with a page listing all sources in the same order and numbering used in the book. To access them, visit:

israels911.substack.com/p/sources
israels911.wordpress.com/sources
israels911.blogspot.com/p/sources.html

If any link no longer works—for example, if an article has been taken down—you can try retrieving it through archive.org or archive.today. These internet archives are invaluable tools, and several sources cited in this book survive only through their archived versions.

Regarding the sources themselves: they are drawn from a wide range of reputable and verifiable outlets. Most come from mainstream media, major newspapers, academic reports, and official documents, but some alternative media sources are included as well. Every outlet has its own editorial perspective, but what matters here is factual accuracy. All information—regardless of the political leaning of the source—was carefully examined and cross-checked before inclusion.

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"This is our 9/11. We are committed to change the equation, to shatter the old paradigm."
– UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan, Fox News

"Israeli officials obtained Hamas's battle plan for the Oct. 7 terrorist attack more than a year before it happened, documents, emails and interviews show. … The failures to connect the dots echoed another analytical failure more than two decades ago, when the American authorities also had multiple indications that the terrorist group Al Qaeda was preparing an assault."
– The New York Times

"Let's remember here, the people we are fighting today, we funded 20 years ago… let's be careful what we sow."
– Hillary Clinton, CNN

"After Netanyahu finished handing over millions of dollars to Hamas, he moved on to supplying weapons to groups in Gaza affiliated with ISIS."
– Opposition leader Yair Lapid, CNN

"Hamas' original goal was to take control of 221 settlements and expel the 'settlers' … with 'priority to (expelling) women and children, and taking men aged 17-50 as hostages.' The order concludes by summarizing the main goal of the October 7 operation: 'Take a large number of soldiers prisoner ... "
– Israel Hayom

"The order: Prevent terrorists from returning to Gaza 'at all costs,' even if they have hostages with them."
– Ynet

"While balancing accuracy with the scope of damage, right now we're focused on what causes maximum damage."
– IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari, The Guardian

"Adi Wegman, Shir Landau and Shirona Partam (former members of the IDF Spokesperson Unit) initiated dozens of articles in the international press, such as the Daily Mail, CNN, MSNBC, New York Post, Washington Post, Sky News, Guardian, Telegraph, and more."
– Calcalist

"Now, the historic mission of the State of Israel is to translate its tremendous military achievements into a political turning point. One that will break the Iranian stranglehold, leverage the current regional opportunity, and create a new regional order in the Middle East."
– Abraham Shield Plan

"When you talk about Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, they have a rabbi. His name is Rabbi Dov Lior. He is the rabbi of the Jewish Underground that intended to blow up the Dome of Rock and, before that, the buses in Jerusalem. Why? In order to hasten the 'last war'… a war of Gog and Magog."
– Former Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, J Street